

IMPACT OF PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT ON ADOLESCENTS' WELL-BEING

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Abstract

An increase in disagreements and low levels of conflict between parents and adolescents is considered typical for adolescence due to the many developmental transitions characteristic for this stage in an adolescent's life. Although most families tend to successfully manage these transitions, for some families the transitions may lead to an escalation of otherwise normal disagreements into high levels of parent-adolescent conflict. A range of factors that may contribute to the different levels of parent-adolescent conflict have been identified by the research on parent-adolescent relationships. However, which specific factors are associated with the increased levels of parent-adolescent conflict as opposed to the parent-adolescent disagreements remains unknown. Some studies suggest that conflict characteristics, in particular conflict frequency, conflict intensity and topics of conflict determine different levels of parent-adolescents conflict. Some studies suggest that parenting styles have a significant impact on the escalation of disagreements into high level of parent-adolescent conflict. Yet other studies suggest that the way in which the conflict is resolved plays a crucial role in determining different levels of conflict (Laursen & Hafen, 2010). The present investigation examines differences between those families who experience low to moderate levels of parent-adolescent conflict and those families who experience high levels of parent-adolescent conflict by incorporating all three factors into investigation. The investigation was conducted as two separate, yet related, studies. A sample of 19 young adults, 18 to 30 years of age, participated in the first study conducted as a retrospective analysis of their experience of conflict with their parents during adolescence. A sample of 21 families with adolescents, 12 to 19 years of age, participated in the second study, conducted to evaluate families' present experience of parent-adolescent conflict. A three-part questionnaire, developed by the researcher for the purpose of the present investigation, was administered to the participants in

both studies. Data obtained from the two samples was qualitatively analysed using grounded theory method and Leximancer. The emergent findings showed that parenting styles and conflict resolution strategies, but not the conflict characteristics, are strongly associated with the escalation of the disagreements into high levels of parent-adolescent conflict.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Adolescence is a period marked by distinctive transformations in physical, cognitive, emotional, social and self-definitional growth and is often perceived as a challenging time in the life of both the adolescent and their family (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). For the adolescents this is a period when they are not only expected to reach physical maturity but also to attain emotional independence from their parents. They do this during a successful progression through culturally influenced developmental tasks, some of which include completing education, making vocational choices, establishing value systems and forming social and romantic relationships (Dekovic, Noom, & Meeus, 1997). For parents, this is a time accentuated by some rapid changes as the adolescent transits from a dependent to an autonomous position, a transition that often demands a marked renegotiation of family roles (Long & Adams, 2001). Renegotiating a previously established child-dependant role to a more autonomous position is a process which at times can be a stressful experience resulting in an escalation of otherwise normal disagreements between parents and adolescents (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Smetana, 2011; Steinberg, 2001).

It is generally recognised that during adolescence most families will experience an increase in the frequency of parent-adolescent disagreements. Parent-adolescent disagreements are particularly salient during early adolescence and typically occur over everyday issues (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Allison & Schultz, 2004). They are often attributed to adolescents' developmental transformations characteristic of puberty, changes in adolescents' social context and developmental changes associated with parents' transition into middle age (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004; Scharf & Mayseless, 2007; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Although they may be frequent and intense, disagreements are not a central characteristic of parent-adolescent relationships. Moderate disagreements are viewed as a

normal and functional feature in adolescents' development into independent, autonomous individuals and in transformation of family relationships (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Scharf & Mayseless, 2007). While most families resolve parent-adolescent disagreements harmoniously, others resolve them in ways that can lead to an escalation of the disagreements into high or low levels of conflict. Depending on the level of conflict, a range of psychological implications for families, parents and adolescents can be observed. It is high conflict and its impact on the adolescent's psychological well-being that is the subject of the present research. The research aims to contribute to an understanding of why some families do and others do not experience high levels of conflict. To distinguish between normal and high levels of conflict, the present investigation uses the term 'disagreements' to refer to oppositional views and behaviours of low to medium intensity with minimal impact on adolescents' psychological well-being, such as daily squabbles and bickering. Conversely, the term 'conflict' is used to refer to oppositional views and behaviours that are of high intensity and have significant psychological implications for adolescents' well-being.

A review of the current research into parent-adolescent relationships points to a number of conclusions that can be drawn in five areas thought to be associated with parent-adolescent disagreements. These five areas are: (1) characteristics of the disagreements; (2) adolescent characteristics contributing to parent-adolescent disagreement; (3) factors related to family, social and cultural environment that contribute to parent-adolescent disagreement; (4) strategies families use to resolve parent-adolescent disagreements; and (5) the impact of parent-adolescent disagreement on the well-being of parents and adolescents (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Cummings & Davis, 1994; Scharf & Mayseless, 2007; Videon 2002).

1. Characteristics of the Disagreements

Disagreement characteristics encompass timing, frequency and intensity of the disagreements and the issues that typically result in parent-adolescent disagreements. Regarding the *timing of disagreements*, it has been consistently shown that disagreements are more prominent during adolescence than during childhood or adulthood (Arnett, 1999; Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). The *frequency of disagreements* is at its highest level in early adolescence (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). A series of meta-analyses conducted by Laursen, Coy and Collins (1998), for example, showed that the disagreements occur most frequently in early adolescence and decline from early to middle adolescence and continue to decline from middle to late adolescence. The *intensity of parent-adolescent disagreements*, on the other hand, is at its highest during middle adolescence and at its lowest during late adolescence (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006; Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998). The *issues that lead to parent-adolescent disagreements* are typically those related to household responsibilities and duties, friendships, school-related activities and adolescent autonomy (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Lerner & Steinberg, 2004; Renk, Liljequist, Simpson, & Phares, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

2. Adolescent Characteristics Contributing to Parent-Adolescent Disagreements

Adolescents' individual characteristics such as those related to typical developmental milestones in adolescence and adolescents' age and gender have frequently been found to impact possible outcomes of parent-adolescent disagreements (Dekovic, 1999; Ganiban, Saudino, Ulbricht, Neiderhiser, & Reiss, 2008; Laursen et al., 1998). While early investigations concerning the impact of puberty on parent-adolescent disagreement are equivocal (Buchanan, Eccles, & Becker, 1992; Bulcroft, 1991; Flannery, Montemayor, Eberly, & Torquati, 1993), more recent studies have shown no direct impact of puberty on

parent-adolescent disagreement (Ge, Conger, Simons, & Murry, 2002; Smetana et al., 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Studies that have investigated *typical developmental features of adolescence* have demonstrated that physical, cognitive, emotional, self-definitional and social changes are positively related to the adolescent's increased negative affect and greater distancing between parents and adolescents (Smetana et al., 2006; Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2011; Spear, 2000). Parent-adolescent disagreement has been found to vary in its frequency and intensity as a function of *adolescents' age* (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004; Smetana, 2011). The frequency of parent-adolescent disagreements is at its peak during early adolescence while the intensity of the disagreements is highest in middle adolescence (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998). The *impact of adolescent gender on parent-adolescent disagreements* has been found to be strongly related to parent-adolescent disagreements, with parents reporting significantly greater disagreements with their daughters than with their sons (Cicognani & Zani, 2009; Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998).

3. Family, Social and Cultural Environment

Particular aspects of family environment have been identified as having a significant influence on parent-adolescent disagreements (Davies & Cummings, 1994; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002; Videon, 2002). These aspects include parenting styles, marital dissolution and inter-parental conflict. Research investigating optimal *parenting practices* indicates that a combination of high levels of warmth and support, a high level of monitoring and an absence of harsh discipline is effective in maintaining low levels of parent-adolescent disagreement (Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005; Steinberg, 2001). These parenting practices most closely match the adolescent's need for autonomy while maintaining connection with their family (Dekovic, 1999). Adolescents exposed to *marital dissolution* and increased *inter-parental conflict* have been reported to be at risk of experiencing heightened emotional vulnerability, conduct-related problems, poor academic achievement,

poorer physical health, teenage pregnancy and difficulty finding suitable employment (Cummings et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2002).

Family stress related to *social factors* such as low socioeconomic status, both short-term and chronic, have been shown to be strongly related to adverse interactions between parents and adolescents, including an increase in parent-adolescent disagreement and the use of harsher and more punitive parenting practices (Grant et al., 2003). Research into *ethnic, racial and cultural variations* demonstrates that parent-adolescent disagreements are less frequent in minority than nonminority ethnic groups and less frequent in collectivistic cultures than individualistic (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Rothbaum, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). The issues that lead to parent-adolescent disagreement seem, nevertheless, to be universal across various ethnic, racial and cultural groups.

4. Conflict Resolution Strategies

Studies examining conflict resolution in families show that adolescents report that they most frequently use disengagement and compliance strategies, while parents report that they most frequently use compromise to resolve their disagreements (Cicognani & Zani, 2009; Smetana et al., 1991b; Smetana et al., 2006). Conversely, research examining interventions for resolution of parent-adolescent disagreement shows that negotiation forms the basis of most parent training programs as it fosters open communication which is often associated with parents' and adolescents' higher satisfaction with their relationship and a stronger sense of self in adolescents (Diamond & Liddle, 1999; Diamond & Siqueland, 1995; Sillars, Smith, & Koerner, 2010).

5. The Impact of Parent-Adolescent Disagreements on the Psychological Well-Being of Parents and Adolescents

Higher levels of parent-adolescent disagreements or conflict are often found to impact adolescents' and parents' psychological well-being by increasing their negative affect and decreasing their life satisfaction (Smetana et al., 2006). The impact of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescent psychological well-being has been closely associated with higher levels of internalising problems such as depression, withdrawal, anxiety, low self-esteem and somatic complaints and externalising problems such as aggression, delinquency or antisocial behaviours and substance use (Branje, van Doorn, Valk, & Meeus, 2009; Buehler & Gerard, 2002; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). In the instances of parents, they may feel stressed, confused and perceive their lives slipping out of their control (Sheridan, Peterson, & Rosen, 2010). This may particularly be relevant to those parents who are simultaneously grappling with the many challenges associated with parenting adolescents and with the challenges associated with changes in their personal life, such as the transition into middle-age.

To understand how the aforementioned five conclusions relate to an escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into parent-adolescent conflict, a comprehensive investigation of the literature concerning each conclusion is provided in the following chapters. Chapter 1 describes the association between characteristics of disagreements and parent-adolescent conflict and the most salient features of this association, namely timing, frequency, intensity and topics of parent-adolescent disagreements. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature on factors associated with typical parent-adolescent disagreements. In this chapter a synthesis of the second and third conclusion is made by focusing on individual and environmental factors found to be associated with family disagreements. Individual factors considered in this chapter include; normal developmental changes which occur during adolescence, adolescents' age and gender as well as adolescents' perceptions of

disagreements with parents and environmental factors such as family stressors (inter-parental conflict, marital relationship), siblings, culture and ethnicity. Parenting, although an element of family environment, is explored separately in Chapter 3 as a result of the research findings showing a strong association between different levels of parent-adolescent disagreements and different types of parenting styles. How each parenting style may contribute to the escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into parent-adolescent conflict is thus reviewed in this chapter. An evaluation of the literature and research related to the fourth conclusion, conflict resolution strategies, is offered in Chapter 4. The main focus of this chapter is families' practices of resolving parent-adolescent disagreements, in particular, which strategies families use most often and how effective those strategies are in reducing parent-adolescent disagreements and/or conflict. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of the literature relevant to the first four conclusions about parent-adolescent disagreements and leads to the next section of the present investigation, which includes an outline of two studies conducted within the present investigation. In Chapter 5, preceding the presentation of the studies, the challenges encountered during the recruitment of participants for the studies are discussed. The following chapter, Chapter 6, relates to the first study, with a review of the literature and research findings on the effects of parent-adolescent disagreements beyond adolescence. Particular attention is placed on the examination of young adults' experiences of parent-adolescent disagreements to ascertain whether young adults who experienced high levels of conflict during adolescence continue to encounter negative ramifications from this in later life. The first study within the present investigation is outlined in Chapter 7, including a detailed description of the methodology used in the study and the results obtained. The fifth conclusion, impact of parent-adolescent conflict on the overall well-being of adolescents and parents is discussed in the context of current literature and research in Chapter 8 as a backdrop to the second study in the present investigation. Chapter 9 provides a thorough

description of the methodology and the results of the second study. Chapter 10 is comprised of a discussion of the combined findings derived from the two studies and how they relate to the findings from the previous studies highlighted in the literature review. Possible applications of the current findings in the context of early prevention of normal parent-adolescent disagreements escalating into high level of parent-adolescent conflict, together with the study limitations and recommendations are also included in this final chapter.

6. Characteristics of Parent-Adolescent Disagreements

Where early studies depict adolescence as a time of intrusive and deleterious conflictual interactions between parents and adolescents (Eccles et al., 1993; Freud, 1968, 1969; Pasley & Gecas, 1994), recent studies have taken a more normative approach with a focus on more beneficial features of parent-adolescent disagreements (Dunn, 2004; Laursen, & Adams, 2009; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). However, both earlier and recent studies view disagreements between parents and adolescents as an integral part of the development of the adolescent into an independent and autonomous individual. As such, normative features of parent-adolescent disagreements, including frequency and intensity of disagreements and the issues that typically result in parent-adolescent disagreements have been studied in relation to their impact on individual and family adjustment.

Regarding the *frequency of disagreements*, it has been consistently shown that when compared to the frequency of disagreements that occur with parents during childhood and adulthood, the frequency of parent-adolescent disagreements during adolescence is higher (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Jensen-Campbell and Graziano (2000) collected data from 155 adolescents aged 11 to 15 years and demonstrated that frequency of parent-adolescent disagreement is generally low as more non-conflictual than conflictual interactions between parents and adolescents were reported by participating adolescents. In relation to frequency of disagreements across different stages of adolescence, early assumptions that disagreements between parents and adolescents follow an inverted U-shaped function where disagreement increases in early adolescence, reaches its peak in middle adolescence and declines in late adolescence, have been challenged (Hill & Holmbeck, 1985; Montemayor, 1983; Steinberg & Hill, 1978). A series of meta-analyses conducted by Laursen, Coy and Collins (1998) showed that frequency of disagreements reaches a peak in

early adolescence, declines from early to middle adolescence and then continues to decline from middle to late adolescence. When the total amount of parent-adolescent disagreements was examined, Dekovic (1999) found no difference across the three age groups of adolescents. To test variability in the reported frequency of disagreements, Burk, Denissen, Van Doorn, Branje and Laursen (2009) employed two types of assessments, topic-based surveys and interactions-based diaries with a sample of 564 Dutch, German and American adolescents aged between 14 and 22 years. The authors used the term conflict and defined it as “behavioural opposition and disagreements” (p. 175) and found that both types of retrospective measures, although not identical, yielded moderate stability of conflict frequency within parent-adolescent relationships and between adolescent-parent and adolescent-friend relationships.

On the other hand, the *intensity of parent-adolescent disagreements* has been found to be at its highest during middle adolescence and at its lowest during late adolescence (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). A meta-analytic review by Laursen, Coy and Collins (1998) confirmed that the trajectory of disagreement intensity follows an ascending function from early to middle adolescence and a descending function from middle to late adolescence. The authors’ general conclusion suggests that disagreement rate and disagreement intensity, when considered separately, follow slightly different trajectories but, when combined, the overall disagreement between parents and adolescents does not increase significantly throughout adolescence. Therefore, based on the recent findings it is proposed that the relationship between parents and adolescents is marked more by transformations than disruptions, challenging the often held belief that adolescence is typically a period characterised by stressful and tumultuous parent-child interactions (Arnett, 1999; Montemayor, 1986).

In examining frequency and intensity of parent-adolescent disagreements, Allison and Schultz (2004) administered a modified version of the Issues Checklist (Prinz, Forster, Kent, & O'Leary, 1979) to 357 early adolescents (11 to 14 years of age) from mostly two parent families. Adolescents' self-reported ratings on a 3-point scale (1-angry arguments, 3-little angry and 5-calm arguments) yielded results consistent with the Laursen et al.'s (1998) findings. Younger adolescents reported more frequent disagreements with their parents than did their 14 year-old counterparts. The level of disagreement intensity was generally found to be moderate across all age groups with girls reporting more intense conflicts with their parents compared to boys. Furthermore, the results of the investigation suggested that both parents and adolescents generally viewed frequent, but not intense, disagreements as not serious enough to produce intense arguing. These disagreements usually relate to issues parents deem important and thus keep imposing on adolescents, who in turn regard the same issues as not warranting strong emotional reactions. On the other hand, intense but less frequent disagreements appear to be related to specific acts or behaviours such as resistance to comply with parents' directives and engaging in delinquent behaviours. While adolescents seldom display these behaviours, when present they may elicit a strong emotional reaction from parents which in turn can be reciprocated in an equally charged manner by their adolescent children.

Riesch, Bush, Nelson, et al. (2000) conducted a descriptive investigation in an attempt to expand on possible determinants of parent-adolescent disagreements and to discern normative from non-normative parent-adolescent conflict. The authors administered the 44-item Issues Checklist (Robin, 1975) to 163 parent-adolescent dyads recruited from a random population. The scores obtained from the parents (aged 35-45 years) and the adolescents (aged 11-14 years), demonstrated that conflict is more prevalent in families with younger

adolescent children and that parent-adolescent conflict does not usually elicit high levels of intensity.

The *issues that lead to parent-adolescent conflict* are typically those related to household responsibilities and duties, friendships, school-related activities and autonomy (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Lerner & Steinberg, 2004; Renk, Liljequist, Simpson, & Phares, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Of those studies that focus on frequency and intensity of parent-adolescent conflict only a few are concerned with issues that lead to the parent-adolescent conflict. In most cases, conflict between parents and adolescents involves mundane, everyday issues of family life such as household chores, social life and intra-familial relationships (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Montemayor, 1983; Smetana, 1996). Issues pertaining to adolescents' responsibilities, privileges and relationships generate frequent conflicts that denote adolescents' yearning for more autonomy and independence while issues of a sensitive nature, such as substance use, dating, sex, religion and politics, seem to occur less (Renk, Liljequist, Simpson, & Phares, 2005). In Ozmete and Bayoglu's (2009) study, the list of most frequent topics that generate parent-adolescent disagreements was topped by issues such as household chores, time management, how money is spent, communication with family members and adolescents' independent behaviours. Similar findings were reported by Allison and Schultz (2004) who found that issues associated with fulfilling adolescents' home and school related responsibilities, such as cleaning their room, playing loud music and doing homework, were closely associated with high frequency of conflict between parents and adolescents.

Renk, Liljequist, Simpson and Phares (2005) examined the content of parent adolescent conflict with the aim of establishing the types of topics over which parents and adolescents disagree most of the time. One hundred and fifty triads (families with two biological parents and one adolescent child aged between 11 and 18 years) completed a

questionnaire where they indicated three topics that they considered generated the most parent-adolescent conflict in the family. Eleven distinct categories of conflictual topics were identified: adolescent need for individuation, adolescent need for independence, peers, school, behaviour problems (e.g., acting out), household responsibilities, intra-familial relationships, extracurricular activities, values, parental behaviour and material possessions. Renk et al. (2005) concluded that the most frequent topics about which parents and adolescents argued included household rules and responsibilities, school, intra-familial relationships and the adolescent's need for individuation and independence. Substance use, smoking, dating and sex were the least frequent topics of parent-adolescent conflict.

In summary, most contemporary studies agree that parent-adolescent conflict is generally low in frequency and mild in intensity. When compared across the three phases of adolescence, conflict frequency is found to be higher in early than middle and late adolescence while conflict intensity is moderate and more common in middle adolescence (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Laursen et al., 1998). The most common topics that generate frequent but not intense conflicts between parents and adolescents concern mundane, everyday issues about household and school responsibilities, peers and intra-familial relationships. Conversely, topics that are associated with the least frequent but most intense conflict between parents and adolescents include sex, dating, substance use, religion and politics. The research on parent-adolescent relationships also concludes that, as opposed to no conflict or high conflict with parents, low to moderate parent-adolescent conflict is a normative and transient change during adolescence that is necessary for a healthy transformation of family relationships. Although the terms high and low level of parent-adolescent conflict are both used in the parent-adolescent relationship literature, what constitutes these different levels of conflict is still unclear. Furthermore, little is known about the circumstances in which low levels of parent-adolescent conflict escalate

to high levels of conflict. This is due to at least four issues concerning the research into parent-adolescent conflict. Firstly, findings are predominantly analysed using only quantitative data analysis. Although quantitative data analysis is considered to have more intellectual rigour, it may be restricted in terms of its ability to explore complex domains of human interactions due to testing narrowly defined research questions in a limited context (Cretchley, Gallois, Chenery, & Smith, 2010). Qualitative studies, on the other hand, provide an opportunity for more in depth exploration of complex human interactions. The present investigation is designed primarily as a qualitative exploration in order to generate a more detailed account of which specific factors lead to escalated levels of parent-adolescent conflict.

Secondly, although a review of the current literature suggests that low to medium level conflict is typical during adolescence and that high level conflict is rare, what constitutes low, medium and high levels of conflict is still undetermined (Smetana, 2011). Furthermore, little is known about whether different levels of parent-adolescent conflict are associated with different psychological outcomes in adolescents (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). More specifically, it remains unclear whether low and medium levels of parent-adolescent conflict are associated with better psychological outcomes for adolescents and whether high level parent-adolescent conflict is associated with more deleterious psychological outcomes for adolescents. In order to differentiate between typical parent-adolescent conflict and escalated levels of conflict, the term ‘disagreements’ will be used throughout the present investigation to refer to low and medium levels of conflict and the term ‘conflict’ will be used to refer to escalated or high levels of conflict.

Thirdly, the research into parent-adolescent conflict rarely includes a retrospective exploration of the effects of parent-adolescent conflict on young individuals across adolescence and young adulthood. Retrospective investigations of the effects of parent-

adolescent conflict on young adults' overall well-being may provide important insights into how different levels of parent-adolescent conflict might influence young individuals' psychological adjustment over time.

Fourthly, most of the findings from investigations of parent-adolescent conflict are based on single informant reports. Very few studies have investigated both parents' and adolescents' experiences of conflict. The primary goal of the present investigation is to extend existing knowledge about the specific factors which might be associated with different levels of parent-adolescent conflict and how different levels of conflict might impact on the individual adjustment of adolescents and to a lesser extent, on their parents. To address this goal the following research questions were addressed:

How do adolescents and parents experience parent-adolescent conflict characteristics, i.e. conflict presence, onset, frequency, intensity and topics?

Are there differences in the types of conflict resolution strategies used across low, medium and high levels of parent-adolescent conflict?

Are there differences in the overall level of adolescents' and parents' well-being across low, medium and high levels of parent-adolescent conflict?

To answer these questions the current investigation was conducted as a sequence of two related, yet separate studies. The first study was a retrospective investigation of young adults' experience of parent-adolescent conflict during their own adolescence. The second study was a comparative investigation of both parents' and adolescents' experience of parent-adolescent conflict. Qualitative analysis, with some quantitative statistics, was used to interpret the data collected from each of the two studies. Findings from the two studies are discussed in the context of possible contributors to parent-adolescent conflict and differential outcomes for adolescents' overall wellbeing in relation to different levels of parent-adolescent conflict.

Research investigating possible determinants of typical disagreements between parents and adolescents is reviewed in the next chapter to provide a context for understanding the major developmental features that typically occur during adolescence and their influence on parent-adolescent disagreements.

Chapter 2: Factors Associated with Parent-Adolescent Disagreements

The factors associated with parent-adolescent disagreements are grouped into two categories, individual and environmental factors. *Individual factors* relate to the specific features of adolescents and include developmental changes (physical, cognitive, emotional, self-definitional and social), adolescents' age and gender and adolescents increased independence and autonomy. *Environmental factors* relate to the influences to which adolescents are exposed and include family environment, culture and ethnicity.

Individual Factors

The period of adolescence is most commonly divided into three stages: early adolescence (10-13 years), middle adolescence (14-17 years) and late adolescence (18-21 years) (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Each stage is characterised by salient and progressive physical, cognitive, emotional, self-definitional, and social transformations that develop at a different rate for boys and girls and of which some are gender specific (Comstock, 1994; Sillars, Koerner, & Fitzpatrick, 2005). It is argued that these transformations can have a profound impact on parent-adolescent relationships and potentially give rise to the escalation of parent-adolescent disagreement (Arnett, 1999; Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

Developmental Features of Adolescence

Physical changes. The onset of adolescence in both sexes is marked by two major physical changes: growth spurt and puberty. Growth spurt refers to the dramatic physical changes in adolescents' size and shape, and puberty refers to a point in life when an individual reaches sexual maturity, which starts soon after a growth spurt and is triggered by hormonal changes giving the body an adult-like appearance (Siegler, DeLoache, &

Eisenberg, 2011). The physical changes observed throughout adolescence peak during the middle stage while full physical development is attained in the late stage of adolescence.

Changes associated with physical maturation and puberty not only shape the adolescent's physical growth but also significantly influence the way adolescents and parents think about adolescents' changing needs and skills (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Physical changes associated with adolescence have been found to elicit marked changes in the adolescents' image of themselves and often result in adolescents' uncertainty about how to approach their changing physical appearances (Steinberg & Steinberg, 1994). Studies by Harter (as cited in Steinberg & Morris, 2001) showed that adolescent's uncertainty, found to be amplified by the increase in social comparisons and the decline in social status associated with starting high school, can have eroding effects on early adolescents' self-esteem. Prominent physical transformations that occur during adolescence also affect parents' perception of their children, resulting in increased parental expectations of their adolescent children to behave in a more adult way. The issue parents often experience difficulty with is how to appropriately respond to adolescents' physical changes as they sometimes underestimate or overestimate the impact of these changes on their maturing children (Comstock, 1994; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Furthermore, these physical changes may not be aligned with adolescents' cognitive or emotional growth. This misalignment can affect parents' ability to objectively assess their adolescent's needs and skills and may lead to inappropriate responses from parents towards their teenage children (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Implications of these inappropriate parental responses can create a potential for escalating parent-adolescent disagreement aside from generating adolescent ambivalence about their parents' affection, guidance and support (Comstock, 1994).

Cognitive changes. Adolescence is a period of substantial brain maturation during which adolescents' cognitive abilities become similar to those of adults (Casey, Jones, & Hare, 2008; Steinberg, 2009).

Among the many theories of child and adolescent cognitive development, the most salient are the stage theories formulated by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg (Siegler et al., 2011). These theories provide a broad and comprehensive overview of developmental milestones, from infancy to young adulthood. According to Piaget's (cited in Siegler et al., 2011) theory of cognitive development, adolescents have entered the fourth and final stage of cognitive development referred to as the formal operational stage, a stage that is characterised by an increase in abstract and hypothetical thinking. The formal operational stage does not emerge until early adolescence and even then it may not be attained by all adolescents (Kuhn, 2008). Their newly developed way of reasoning allows adolescents to view their parents' credibility in a different light. Consequently, it enables them to challenge their parents' arguments and in some cases leads to questioning or rejection of parental authority (Smetana et al., 2006). Ultimately, they want to be acknowledged by their parents as cognitively competent and able to contribute more to family discussions (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004).

According to Kohlberg's three-tiered model of moral reasoning (as cited in Siegler et al., 2011), adolescents enter the second or conventional level, which centres on social relations and conformity to social duties and laws. During this cognitive transition adolescents are moving away from conforming to stereotypical ideas of 'good boy/nice girl' (by performing pleasing behaviours in order to gain others' approval) and moving toward establishing or maintaining social order. In Kohlberg's view, some individuals in late adolescence reach the 'social-conventional' stage within the post-conventional level of moral reasoning. This stage emphasises the tendency to compare parental behaviours and moral values to those of society. However, most adolescents stay at the conventional level, which is

typically characterised by adolescents' arrival at a realisation that social conventions and moral standards are subjective constructs. This realisation may lead adolescents to question their parents' rules, values, and principles. This questioning of rules and absolutes may play a role in daily parent-adolescent disagreements over simple issues. Parents tend to perceive things as matters of right or wrong, consistent with social and moral conventions, while adolescents consider the same issues as matters of personal choice (Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

Cognitive advances during adolescence, as postulated by Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories, have been tested using sophisticated neural imaging techniques which provide neurobiological explanations for behavioural changes associated with adolescence. Findings from studies conducted within developmental neuroscience have indicated that the prefrontal cortex and limbic system of the brain undergo significant changes during adolescence (Smetana et al., 2006). In the prefrontal cortex the changes include: a) synaptic pruning, a process of elimination of unused neural connections that leads to significant improvements in basic information processing and logical reasoning, and b) intense myelination, a process during which nerve fibres are coated in myelin which improves the efficiency of neural signalling and connectivity. This process leads to improvement of higher order functions, which include response inhibition, planning ahead, weighing risks and rewards and simultaneous consideration of multiple sources of information (Casey, Jones, & Hare, 2008; Kuhn, 2006, 2008). In the limbic system, the changes include: a) increase in connectivity between cortical and subcortical brain regions (this is particularly important for emotion regulation), and b) increase in concentration of dopamine receptors which play a crucial role in the rise of behaviours associated with sensation seeking and anticipation of a reward (Casey, Jones, & Hare, 2008; Kuhn, 2006, 2008). These changes are also found to continue beyond adolescence and seem to be linked with adolescents' self-regulation and more mature decision-making functions (Keating, 2004; Spear, 2000)

Emotional changes. During adolescence, and particularly during early and middle adolescence when puberty is at its peak level, negative affect or mood (e.g., disagreement, complaining, anger) increases while positive affect (e.g., support, affection) decreases (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). The increase of negative affect associated with pubertal changes is found to perturb parent-adolescent relations. For example, based on the results of a series of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of parent-adolescent relationships, Steinberg and Steinberg, and Hill (as cited in Allison & Schultz, 2004) found that changes in adolescents' mood and their emotional distancing varied as a function of adolescents' physical maturity in puberty. One possible explanation for the increase in negative affect during adolescence may relate to the greater number of transformational changes adolescents experience at this stage in their life compared to childhood and adulthood (Spear, 2000). To this explanation it can be added that as much as the transformational changes are necessary for a normal process of healthy individuation from the family environment, these changes may also be highly challenging and overwhelming at times. Given that adolescents' capacity to respond to various life stressors is yet to be fully developed and overcoming challenges associated with the developmental transformations may render them emotionally vulnerable (Spear, 2000). It is this emotional vulnerability that is manifested in adolescents' mood changes and emotional distancing.

Self-definitional changes. As they continue to mature physically, cognitively and emotionally, adolescents gain a greater sense of self. They define themselves in terms of personal beliefs and standards and their concept of self becomes better organised and more differentiated (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). In general, their sense of self is stable over time but early adolescents tend to report more daily fluctuations than middle and late adolescents, while middle adolescents are inclined to hold inconsistent views of themselves across different situations (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). This inconsistency of self-portrayal,

however, diminishes over time as a result of further advances in adolescents' cognitive skills, predominantly an improved understanding of abstract concepts, including the concept of self (Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

Due to their mature physical appearance, more advanced way of thinking and increased responsibilities, adolescents may want to be treated more as adults than as children. They want to assert themselves as autonomous and independent individuals, capable of making their own choices and decisions (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). In their pursuit to attain autonomy and independence, adolescents may clash with their parents who still feel responsible for and in control of their adolescents' lives. Disagreements may thus escalate as a result of parents' tendency to continue to maintain authority over their adolescent children while adolescents seek greater autonomy and independence (Comstock, 1994; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

Social changes. Adolescents' view of their parents as the primary source of support weakens in adolescence. Instead, adolescents perceive peer relations as providing greater closeness, intimacy and reciprocity (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Smetana et al., 2006). Adolescents attribute to peers many roles that parents previously played in their lives including role modelling and provision of emotional support and guidance (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Scharf & Mayseless, 2007). Additionally, peers' positive effect on adolescents in terms of offering greater opportunities for recreational, academic and social activities outside the family, reinforces adolescents' increased need to spend more time with their peers than with their parents (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). For parents, this may pose a challenge as they might perceive a decline in their influence over different domains in the lives of their adolescents and thus feel pushed away, or in some cases rejected (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Because peers can also have a negative effect on adolescents in terms of exposure to delinquent behaviours and substance use, parents may, at times, exert a strong

influence over their adolescents' choice of friends (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). For adolescents, the choice of friends is often an issue of their personal choice and thus outside parental control. However, parents may feel responsible for who their children choose as their role models and thus regard this matter as being under their control (Allison & Schultz, 2004). This concern for their adolescents' choice of friends can have a spillover effect on the adolescents' relations with the opposite sex (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). However, despite the increased reliance on peers for socialisation and guidance, adolescents still regard their parents to be important and influential people, especially in making appropriate choices and decisions in their lives.

Age. Age related changes during adolescence are found to be associated with several different aspects of parent-adolescent disagreement. For example, early adolescents tend to have more disagreements with their parents than middle and late adolescents, while the most intense disagreements are between middle adolescents and their parents (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Lerner & Steinberg, 2006). This seems to be the case mainly due to early and middle adolescents' competing tendencies to gain approval and be viewed as 'good' by others, while simultaneously attempting to assert themselves as autonomous individuals, whereas the late adolescent's cognitive advances enable them to better align their need for independence with their need for interdependence (Comstock, 1994; Smetana et al., 2006). Although disagreement rates in late adolescence reach their lowest point since the onset of puberty, due to the increase in use of cooperative interactions, late adolescents may still experience disagreement with their parents (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Collins & Steinberg, 2006). The difference between parent-adolescent disagreements during late adolescence, relative to early and middle adolescence, is in disagreement intensity. Disagreements between parents and late adolescents are more affectively intense.

Another age related change concerns the issues about which adolescents and parents tend to argue most of the time. According to observations made by Renk et al. (2005), issues concerning adolescents' autonomy and responsibility are closely linked with the highest number of disagreements in families with early and middle adolescents and by late adolescence these issues had either declined or been resolved. Allison and Schultz (2004) found that, compared to late adolescents, early and middle adolescents experience greater difficulty in negotiating which issues come under their jurisdiction and which issues come under the authority of their parents. Findings from Cicognani and Zani's (2009) study demonstrated that middle adolescents, compared to late adolescents, added peer group issues as a frequent topic of disagreements with their mothers. Mothers of early adolescents indicated that school issues commonly created frequent disagreements with their teens compared to mothers of middle and late adolescents. According to fathers, school related issues seem to dominate arguments with early and middle but not late adolescents.

When reports from both adolescents and parents were provided, different age related trajectories were detected (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Adolescents' reports indicated that during early and middle adolescence, separation and individuation were the most frequent topics of disagreement, whereas parents' reports indicated that teen behaviour problems, household rules/responsibilities and intra-familial relationships were more frequent topics of disagreement with early rather than middle adolescents.

Gender. Studies of gender differences during adolescence consistently show that relationships with mothers and fathers differ with mother-daughter dyads experiencing higher instances of disagreements than any other parent-adolescent dyad (Smetana et al., 2006). Cicognani and Zani's (2010) study supported this finding by observing a relationship between gender differences and parent-adolescent disagreement in 302 families with adolescent children aged 13 and 15 years. Parents and adolescents were asked to complete the

“When We Disagree” scale (Honess et al, 1997) that measures two styles of disagreement (compromise and aggression) and three types of disagreement outcome (frustration, escalation and intimacy). Participants reported higher levels of disagreement in mother-adolescent dyads than father-adolescent dyads in early adolescence with mother-adolescent disagreement being further on the rise as a function of increase in adolescent’s age. Furthermore, girls in this study exhibited greater vulnerability to disagreement with a parent, unlike boys, who displayed open hostility and aggression during parent-adolescent disagreement. The results of the study also highlighted the necessity of examining the topics of parent-adolescent disagreement within the context of gender and age of adolescents and parents’ gender. The study indicated that sons reported that behavioural problems were often a topic of disagreement with both parents, whereas material possessions created more disagreement with fathers than mothers. Mothers reported that behavioural problems were the usual topic of arguments with their sons whereas fathers stated that peer group issues generated higher levels of disagreement with their daughters. Household rules and responsibilities created the most disagreement with mothers in early adolescence and with fathers in early and middle adolescence.

Gender differences in adolescents were also observed in relation to expectations regarding gender roles. Comstock (1994) found that boys tend to strive toward escaping punishment through keeping peace and avoiding disagreement, while girls are carefully selecting strategies for handling conflictual interactions with their parents that will be least harmful to everyone. Dekovic, Noom and Meeus (1997) found that unlike boys, who are expected to achieve earlier maturation in terms of behavioural autonomy and dating, girls are expected to be more physically mature and more consistent with their traditional gender role of establishing friendships and social networks.

Some gender specific differences within the context of parent-adolescent disagreement can be observed in relation to adolescents' cognitive advances. Middle and late adolescent boys tend to be preoccupied with keeping peace and avoiding punishment from authorities resulting in disengagement during disagreement with parents (Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Conversely, middle and late adolescent girls seem reticent to maintain social order as their main concern is with establishing a balance between caring for others and caring for themselves (Comstock, 1994).

Autonomy. A substantial number of studies have focused on the relationship between parent-adolescent disagreements and the development of adolescent autonomy. Typical disagreements between parents and adolescents are considered to be an impetus for an adolescent's separation from parents and development into an autonomous individual. Research investigating possible determinants of parent-adolescent disagreements posits that adolescents' need for more autonomy and greater control over their behaviours leads to marked disruptions in the relationship between parents and adolescents (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2004).

Studies exploring the effects of increased autonomy on the quality of parent-adolescent relationships consist of those focussing on behavioural autonomy and those focussing on emotional autonomy. This differentiation between behavioural and emotional autonomy is based on the distinctive effects that the two categories may have on adolescent development (Steinberg & Silk, 2004). Behavioural autonomy represents the adolescent's ability to make independent decisions in both the absence and excess of external influence or supervision while emotional autonomy represents the adolescent's subjective sense of his or her independence particularly in relation to parents (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Depending on the context of the parent-adolescent relationship the development of autonomy in adolescence may have either beneficial or deleterious effects on the nature of parent-

adolescent conflict. For example, Peterson, Bush and Supple (1999) found in their study of 594 European-American adolescents and their parents that adolescents' behavioural autonomy thrived within a context of relationship connectedness and declined within a context of relationship restrictiveness. When adolescents saw their parents as a valuable source of support, knowledge and guidance and as figures of authority, behavioural autonomy was reported to be more attainable. When adolescents perceived their parents to exercise parental punitiveness and coercive authority, emotional distancing between parents and adolescents was reported and adolescents felt discouraged to exercise behavioural autonomy, which the authors explained as adolescents' expression of their feelings of hostility and resentment toward their parents. Due to the sample in this study being highly homogeneous, the results may be limited in their generalizability, however, they suggest that behavioural autonomy in adolescents thrives in the context of relationship connectedness and is discouraged in the context of a punitive and coercive family environment. Thus, in relation to parent-adolescent conflict a balance between behavioural autonomy and relationship connectedness would need to be established for the conflict to have a beneficial impact on adolescents' overall development.

Parra and Oliva (2009) arrived at similar conclusions in their analysis of emotional autonomy, which they conceptualised as consisting of two components, cognitive and emotional. Parra and Oliva (2009) were interested in determining the nature of the relationship between emotional autonomy and dysfunctional family interactions. As a backdrop to their study, the authors emphasised the differing views presented by two opposing groups of researchers in relation to the interaction between emotional autonomy and parent-adolescent disagreement. According to Parra and Oliva (2009), researchers such as Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) regard increased emotional autonomy as necessary for the acquisition of adult roles. Steinberg and Silverberg (cited in Parra & Oliva, 2009) defined

emotional autonomy in adolescents as comprising the cognitive component of de-idealising parents and seeing them in a more realistic view and the emotional component of increased self-reliance and independence. On the other hand, authors such as Ryan and Lynch (1989) claim that increased emotional autonomy is a reflection of problematic family dynamics and adolescents' detachment from their parents (Parra & Oliva, 2009). To test the claims of the earlier authors, Parra and Oliva set out to explore the trajectory of the emotional autonomy and its defining components during adolescence. Additionally, they hypothesised that high emotional autonomy is a manifestation of dysfunctional family dynamics which leads to greater levels of parent-adolescent disagreement. The authors utilized a sample of 101 Spanish adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19 years for 5 years during which time the participants were required to complete a battery of questionnaires at early, middle and late adolescence. The results revealed that, overall, emotional autonomy, measured using Steinberg and Silverberg's (1986) Emotional Autonomy Scale, did not change over the three stages of adolescence. However, when the cognitive and emotional components were individually analysed, a different trend was detected. The findings showed that regarding the cognitive components of autonomy, over the years, the adolescents' perceptions of their parents gradually became more realistic and de-idealised. They also reported feeling more able to manage challenging situations with less reliance on their parents. As for the emotional components of autonomy, the results of the study indicated that they peak in early adolescence and, thereafter, follow two different trajectories. The first refers to the group of adolescents whose display of increased autonomy was found to be associated with greater levels of parent-adolescent disagreement. The other refers to the group of adolescents for whom autonomy declines over the years and is associated with less parent-adolescent disagreement. The authors thus concluded that, in general, the findings of their study were

congruent with those of Ryan and Lynch, which posit that adolescents strive to establish emotional autonomy while maintaining good family relationships.

Parra and Oliva (2009) explained that, as a result of their choice of measuring instrument, their findings might not represent the general course of autonomy development during adolescence. Based on their results, Steinberg and Silverberg's (1986) Emotional Autonomy Scale appears to measure an index of adolescents' emotional detachment from parents rather than their emotional autonomy. In addition, the instrument's subscales (two emotional and two cognitive) have yielded low reliability levels, especially among early adolescents, which points to the possibility that young adolescents may have had difficulty understanding the meaning of the scale items. Secondly, autonomy in Parra and Oliva's (2009) study was not explored in the context of different family dynamics. No mention was made of how autonomy is managed among families where different levels of parent-adolescent disagreements are present. Furthermore, the findings of Parra and Oliva's (2009) investigation are limited in their generalisability due to the exclusive reliance on adolescents' self-reports. The concept of emotional autonomy and emotional detachment may not be interpreted in the same way by parents and adolescents.

In their year long study of 17 adolescent girls aged 15 years Lichtwarck-Aschoff, Kunnen and Van Geer (2010) investigated how adolescents' sense of autonomy emerges out of parent-adolescent conflict. More specifically, the authors were interested in investigating the relationship between emotions arising during the parent-adolescent conflict and adolescents' level of assertiveness and control and how this relationship may affect adolescents' emotions after the conflict. Additionally, Lichtwarck-Aschoff and her colleagues explored the impact of adolescents' level of autonomy long-term on how adolescents' are managing conflict with their parents short-term. The authors utilized daily diaries to investigate the link between the daily occurrence of parent-adolescent disagreement and

autonomy development in adolescents with a focus on both emotional and behavioural components of autonomy. In regard to the emotional autonomy, the authors specifically targeted adolescents' emotional reactions during and after the disagreement with their mothers while the adolescent girls' level of self-assertiveness and control during the disagreements was a target of the authors' exploration of behavioural autonomy. The questions in the diaries were grouped into two sets, the first one gathered general information about the amount of time adolescents spent with their mothers, how close they felt to their mothers, whether they engaged in some fun activities with their mothers and whether they had any disagreement with their mothers. If there was no disagreement being reported, the entry into the diary would cease at that point, otherwise adolescents would continue reporting information on the questions from the second set which concerned disagreement topic, their emotions during and after the disagreement and their perception of how assertive and in control they were within the disagreement. Adolescents recorded the necessary information at six different intervals over a year with each interval covering a period of two consecutive weeks.

The results showed that the adolescent girls displayed a sequence of three different responses during conflict interactions with their mothers. These were pursuit, withdrawal and disengagement. In the pursuit response, teenagers reacted angrily during the disagreement with their mothers. They seemed to use anger to assert high levels of control and to feel neutral or positive after the disagreement. Anger also seems to create a greater likelihood that adolescents will remove the obstacle of their disagreements with their parents. In the withdrawal response, adolescents responded with sadness, disappointment or frustration. Although their commitment to attaining the desired goal during the disagreements with their parents remained unwavering, adolescents in this stage of the sequence tended to show a low level of self-assertiveness. Their feelings afterward would, nevertheless, encompass distress

and other negative emotional states, as no resolution took place due to a disparity between adolescents' commitment to the goal and low self-assertiveness. Lastly, in the disengagement response, adolescents responded with guilt and shame during the disagreement, complied with and obeyed parents' authority and resigned from being committed to their goal. They had a neutral or positive emotional state after the disagreement.

The findings further showed strong support for the presence of the pursuit and withdrawal scenarios but not for the disengagement scenario. The authors explained the lack of support for the last scenario as possibly being indicative of adolescents' strong desire to be autonomous and thus deciding not to forfeit their goal leading to a low prevalence of the disengagement scenario. The second hypothesis, which suggested that the pursuit scenario would be more closely associated with an upsurge of autonomy over time, was also supported by the results of this study. Based on their findings, the authors suggested that the pursuit scenario might be responsible for the activation of the adolescents' increased reliance on their level of autonomy, which usually leads to the goal attainment within the parent-adolescent disagreement. This pattern seems to further reinforce adolescents continuing to exercise autonomous behaviours, creating a chain reaction of self-reinforcing dynamics. Although this study was conducted as a yearlong investigation, which provided an important and detailed insight into the possible causality of the studied constructs, one of the implications regarding the results' validity includes the fact that only female adolescents participated in the study. There is also a possibility that the participants overrepresented their experiences of the disagreement with their parents as they entered the relevant information on the day of the actual disagreement. Reporting disagreement immediately after it occurred may bias participants' estimation of the importance of emotionally charged arguments (Laursen & Hafen, 2010).

Perceptions. The association between parents' and adolescents' perceptions of autonomy and increased parent-adolescent disagreement has been examined by Dekovic, Noom and Meeus (1997). Using a sample of 508 early, middle and late adolescents and their parents, Dekovic et al. (1997) administered a battery of questionnaires to parents from families from various educational and socioeconomic backgrounds at their homes. The aim of the research was to explore whether parents and adolescents hold different perceptions of the time at which adolescents reached various developmental milestones, mainly related to adolescent autonomy, and how the differences between parents' and adolescents' perceptions might contribute to an increase in parent-adolescent disagreement. Parent-adolescent disagreement was measured with the Parent-Adolescent Disagreement List (Linden & Dijkman, 1989). To assess parents' and adolescents' expectations of when adolescents reached various developmental milestones, the authors devised a new instrument, the Developmental Timetable for Adolescents, which included 24 items measuring personal tasks, relational tasks and socio-institutional tasks. Parents were required to state an age at which they believed adolescents engage, or are expected to engage, in behaviours that comprise the three types of tasks. The investigation yielded results that were consistent with Dekovic et al.'s (1997) supposition that adolescents and their parents would have different perceptions about the timing of adolescents' development. Adolescents indicated earlier developmental timetables for behavioural autonomy, than their parents. The discrepancy in the parents' and adolescents' perceptions was the most salient in the area of decision making regarding romantic relationships and unsupervised activities (e.g., going on a holiday without parents and being home alone while parents are away). The order of developmental tasks through which children progress during adolescence was found to be remarkably comparable between parents' and adolescents' reports, with the personal tasks of making everyday decisions, standing by one's choices and selecting one's own clothes to emerge early in

adolescence while socio-institutional tasks were expected to be reached later in adolescence. The study's results revealed that discrepancy of expectations led to more parent-adolescent disagreement. However, the strength of the association between different expectations and amount of parent-adolescent disagreement in Dekovic et al.'s (1997) study was found to be small. One possible explanation for the small variance could be the study's utilization of parents as the sole participants. Parents' evaluations of the parent-adolescent relationship tend to portray more positive and less conflictual interactions than those of the adolescents (Laursen et al., 1998). Another explanation might be related to the inconsistency between the instruments Dekovic et al. (1997) used to measure adolescent autonomy and parent-adolescent disagreement.

Discrepant parent-adolescent perceptions of parental influence that lead to adolescents' inhibited autonomy have been linked to adolescents' psychosocial functioning with examples including adolescents' poor communication, less interaction with their peers, greater expression of negative affect and greater prevalence of parent-adolescent disagreement (Allen, Hauser, O'Connor, & Bell, 2002; Allen, Hauser, O'Connor, Bell, & Eickholt, 1996). McElhaney, Porter, Thompson and Allen (2008) tested the hypothesis that parents and adolescents' perceptions would differ with parents being more focused on exerting control over their adolescents and adolescents being more focused on feelings of closeness with their parents. The authors further hypothesised that parents' reports will be associated with less expressed support and relatedness within the relationship with their adolescent children and greater tendency to prevent adolescents from exercising autonomy in both family relationships and their friendships. Conversely, they also hypothesised that adolescents' reports would indicate a higher degree of perceived support and closeness within family relationships and friendships. A combination of questionnaires and interviews were conducted with 167 adolescents and their parents to measure reported parental influence,

parental support, parental psychological control, observed support in interactions with mothers and friends, adolescent autonomy and relatedness with parents, adolescent autonomy and relatedness with peers and degree of neighbourhood risk. Results supported the authors' hypothesis that adolescents and parents have different interpretations of what constitutes parental influence. Adolescents' reports of influence showed higher levels of perceived support and engagement while parents' reports of influence showed less support and engagement and diminished autonomy in parent-adolescent and friend-adolescent relationships. Both parents and adolescents reported higher levels of psychological control when parents indicated that they influenced their teenage children to obey rules. The study also revealed that parents' reports of increased control over their adolescent children were strongly associated with less autonomy being exercised by the adolescents in their interactions with both parents and their friends. However, when adolescents' reports indicated strong parental influence, these teenagers were also found to be more likely to approach their parents, particularly their mothers, for advice and emotional support. Similarly, they were more inclined to discuss topics of disagreement. On the other hand, parents who reported less engagement and support in terms of their own influence stated that their children were unlikely to approach them for advice or discuss topics of disagreement. A similar pattern of interactions was detected within adolescent-peer relationships. Adolescents who perceived their parents as influential figures were confident in seeking emotional support and advice from their friends. The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that although there is a growing need in adolescents to be autonomous and independent, they also want to be influenced by their parents. In fact, adolescents who perceived their parents as influential were more confident in themselves and more active in seeking assistance from their mothers and friends. When parents reported being influential over their teenagers, the observed

outcome for their adolescents was a decrease in their willingness to act autonomously and seek emotional support from their parents and peers.

The findings from McElhaney et al.'s (2008) study are significant in that they reveal how parents and adolescents understand differently the concept of parental influence and how their different understandings impact on their interactions.

Although studies such as those by Dekovic et al. (1997) and Dekovic (1999) have emphasized the importance of the presence of divergent perceptions between parents and adolescents in their changing relationship, how and when discrepant perceptions develop is yet unclear. It is clear that adolescents' needs change during their development and that autonomy and independence are among the more salient of those changes (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). However, adolescents still strive to keep close ties with their parents as they are progressing through these developmental transformations (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Steinberg & Morris, 2000). In an environment where adolescent individuation and autonomy are fostered while parents are still perceived as influential figures, adolescents may perceive family interactions as affectionate and warm and their parents as caring and responsible caregivers. On the other hand, parents might be inclined to keep their authority intact and thus resist renegotiation of their family roles due to their belief that retaining their authority is essential for adolescents' safety (Welsh, Galliher, & Powers, 1998). Ensuring adolescents' safety is necessary for adolescents' healthy development, however, excessive parental enforcement of control may potentially lead to suppression rather than expression of autonomy in adolescents.

In summary, the above review of the developmental correlates of parent-adolescent disagreement suggest that the normal developmental features characteristic of adolescence do not, on their own, account for variations in the frequency and/or intensity of parent-adolescent disagreement. Disagreements rather than conflict are associated with normal

physical, cognitive, emotional, social and self-definitional changes seen during adolescence. Along with an increase in adolescent autonomy and independence and different perceptions held by adolescents and parents regarding various aspects of their relationship, these changes serve as a necessary component of adolescent development and should be viewed as part of the normal course of re-negotiation of family relationships (Smetana, 2011). Additionally, environmental factors associated with normative parent-adolescent disagreements include family stressors, sibling relationships and cultural and ethnical correlates.

Environmental Factors

Family stressors. In addition to the influence of normal developmental milestones, particular aspects of a family environment have been identified as having a significant influence on parent-adolescent disagreement (Davies, & Cummings, 1994; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002; Videon, 2002). Exposure to significant changes in family structure, such as marital dissolution and increase in inter-parental conflict, or economic hardship are considered stressful events in the lives of both parents and adolescents and this stress can create a multitude of challenges for families (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Conger, 2001; Davies & Windle, 2001; Gottman & Notarius, 2000; Grant et al., 2003; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Adolescents who encounter stressful family transitions are often found to be at risk of experiencing heightened emotional vulnerability, conduct-related problems, poor academic achievement, poorer physical health, teenage pregnancy and difficulty finding suitable employment (Achenbach, Dumenci & Rescorla, 2002; Cummings et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2002; Grant et al., 2003).

A decline in the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship after *marital dissolution* seems to be especially high within the two years following the divorce and in remarried families (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Furthermore, parent-adolescent disagreement is associated more with marital disagreement than with the divorce per se. Buehler and Gerard (2002)

researched the interaction between marital disagreement, ineffective parenting and adjustment in a sample of 13,017 households that participated in a 1988 National Survey of Families and Households. The authors examined direct and mediating effects of marital disagreement on disagreement between parents and adolescents. A strong association was found between marital disagreement and parent-adolescent disagreement. The authors proposed two alternative explanations for their findings. One was that parents might be more likely to engage in disagreement with their adolescent children due to the negative effects of the marital disagreement on their mental and emotional capacity to consistently respond to adolescents' misbehaviours. The second was that marital disagreement might serve as a model for adolescents to deal with disagreement in a hostile and aggressive manner.

Similarly, in another study of the relationship between family transition (i.e., divorce, remarriage and death) and parent-adolescent disagreement, Ruschena, Prior, Sanson and Smart (2005) found in a sample of 151 adolescents (17 to 18 years old) that compared to a control group, adolescents who experienced one of the stated changes in the family, reported a greater number of disagreements with their parents. In general, adolescents who experienced family transition described their relationship with their parents as being of low quality following the family transition.

Noller, Feeney, Sheehan, Darlington and Rogers's study (2008) utilized two sets of participants, divorced/separated families ($N = 174$) and married families ($N = 179$). At least one child between 10 and 16 years was included. Participants were interviewed in two phases 12 months apart and at each phase a combination of questionnaires and interviews was employed to obtain parents' and adolescents' perspectives on different levels of conflict in the couple, parent-child and sibling relationships. The study found that participants reported more parent-adolescent conflict in separated/divorced families than married families. Furthermore mothers' reports rather than family type (divorced vs. married) correlated with

adolescents' adjustment outcomes. Parent-adolescent conflict in divorced families can be exacerbated by the problems experienced by single parents, such as dealing with the personal stress of marital breakup, change of roles and relationships, moving house, change of school, and financial concerns. Mother-adolescent conflict was reported to be up and down pre-divorce and for some escalated after the divorce. Generally the relationship with mothers was reported to be good. Father-adolescent conflict was rated by adolescents as involving more control and aggression on their fathers' part. For adolescent girls mother's depression or inability to parent effectively was associated with internalizing problems, such as depression and anxiety. For adolescent boys, ineffective parenting was associated with externalizing problems, e.g., delinquency. Another finding was that family conflict had a stronger effect on adolescent adjustment than the family type (divorced vs. married) with the lowest level of adjustment recorded in the families with the highest level of inter-parental conflict.

The effects of *inter-parental disagreements* may be particularly consequential for parent-adolescent relationships if adolescents become involved in the conflict between their parents, and these negative effects are found not to be exclusive to divorced, separated or stepfamilies (Emery, 1999). A longitudinal investigation by Amato and Afifi (2006) demonstrated that inter-parental disagreement in intact families was closely related to more dysfunctional parent-adolescent relationships. The researchers suggested that the negative effect of inter-parental disagreement on parent-adolescent relationships was associated with adolescents' feeling of being caught in the middle. They further stated that the loyalty disagreement may place the relationship between parents and adolescents under more strain, which in turn may produce higher levels of parent-adolescent disagreement. A longitudinal investigation by Unger, Brown, Tressell and McLeod (2000) of 107 adolescents (12-18 years of age) from both divorced and intact families, also concluded that inter-parental disagreement was a much stronger mediating factor than divorce, based on the significant

effects inter-parental disagreement was found to have on the quality of parent-adolescent relationships.

The link between inter-parental disagreement, parent-adolescent disagreement and adolescent psychological adjustment was also investigated by Bradford, Vaughn and Barber (2008). Data was collected from 641 adolescents aged 12 to 18 years who completed a set of questionnaires measuring inter-parental disagreement, parent-adolescent disagreement, youth problem behaviours, depression and religiosity. Findings substantiated the spillover effect of inter-parental disagreement on parent-adolescent relationships. Overt inter-parental disagreement was positively correlated with an increase in externalising problems in adolescents (antisocial behaviours) while covert inter-parental disagreement was positively related to internalising problems in adolescents (depression) in the presence of parent-adolescent disagreement. Inter-parental disagreement interferes with parents' ability to be emotionally available to their children and respond to their children's needs and leads to increased disagreement with their children. Additionally, the effects of inter-parental disagreement on adolescents' well-being did not decline after adding parent-adolescent disagreement to the model. This suggests that inter-parental disagreement and parent-adolescent disagreement may have an additive influence on adolescents' psychological adjustment.

Stress associated with *socioeconomic disadvantage* may have equally deleterious implications for parent-adolescent disagreement as does divorce and inter-parental disagreement. Family stress related to low socioeconomic status, both short-term and chronic, has been shown to be strongly related to adverse interactions between parents and adolescents, including an increase in parent-adolescent disagreement and the use of harsher and more punitive parenting practices (Grant et al., 2003). Higher instances of parent-adolescent disagreement associated with socioeconomic disadvantage have been observed

under the conditions of both chronic and short-term economic hardship (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Parental ability to effectively regulate their adolescents' misbehaviour can be undermined as a result of stress brought about by financial strain. Due to this stress, parents tend to be less involved, less affectionate, more irritable and less consistent in their supervision and discipline of their adolescent children (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002). Consequent to such changes in parenting practices, an escalation of parent-adolescent disagreement may arise (Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

In summary, life stressors have indirect effects on different levels of parent-adolescent disagreement found across families. Marital dissolution, inter-parental disagreement and low socioeconomic status in particular have been found to produce high levels of stress and strain on parents and the family in general. This stress has the potential to affect parents' ability to consistently monitor their adolescent children and provide them with a warm and supportive emotional climate. This can further lead to disrupted parent-adolescent relationships and increased parent-adolescent disagreements. However, not all families react in the same way when placed under this type of duress. Another factor that has been found to have an impact on the reported level of parent-adolescent disagreements is adolescent-sibling relationships.

Siblings. Most studies of sibling relationships have paid more attention to the influences of the parent-adolescent relationship on the interactions between siblings (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2001; Minuchin, 2002). However, the amount of research into sibling influences on parent-adolescent relationships has increased in the past decade (Smetana et al., 2006). This research demonstrates that birth order has an effect on the quality of parent-adolescent relationships. In particular, parent-adolescent disagreements are less prevalent between parents and later born adolescents than parents and their first-born adolescents (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Smetana, 2011; Smetana et al., 2006; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). For example, a longitudinal study by Whiteman, McHale and

Crouter (2003) of 392 families with adolescent children showed that the siblings' birth order affected the amount of disagreement between parents and adolescents. Specifically, parents and second born siblings experienced less disagreement than parents and first-born adolescents when the parent-adolescent relationships were assessed at the same age for both siblings. Additionally, parents reported having more knowledge about the daily activities of their second born adolescent child than their first-born. The results supported the authors' hypothesis that parents become more experienced with their later born children. They seem to use more effective parenting strategies to deal with perturbations associated with adolescence achieving this greater parent-adolescent harmony. However, the study findings seem to be unclear about the degree to which these influences may determine different levels of parent-adolescent disagreements.

The conclusion that parent-adolescent disagreements are less prevalent during the transition of the second born children to adolescence than during the transition of the first born children was also demonstrated in a study conducted by Shanahan, McHale, Osgood and Crouter (2007). The authors studied the association between birth order and parent-adolescent disagreements in their longitudinal study of 201 families with a first born child being 12,13,16 and 17 years old and second born 2 to 3 years younger. Changes in disagreement frequency between first and second born children and their parents from middle childhood to adolescence were reported during four home interviews carried out across 5 years. To assess the frequency of both everyday and major disagreements, the authors asked adolescents to rate on a 6 point scale (1-not at all and 6-several times a day) how often they had arguments with their parents in 11 domains of disagreement (chores, appearances, homework-schoolwork, social life, bedtime-curfew, health, choosing activities, money, behaviour-personality, relationship with friends and disagreement with parents due to relationship with siblings). They found that when the disagreement between first-borns and their parents

increased due to transition to adolescence an increase in the disagreement between second-born children and their parents was also detected. During the second-born children's transitions into adolescence parent-disagreement was less prevalent compared to the first-born children's transition due to parents having more experience in dealing with the challenges of adolescence.

In summary, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship is influenced by the birth order of children in the family. Parents tend to disagree less with and have more knowledge of daily activities of their later born adolescents compared to their firstborn adolescent. However, the effects of birth order on parent-adolescent disagreements can only partially explain what may underlie complex dynamics embedded in parent-adolescent interactions. Another factor that has been identified as having a confounding effect on parent-adolescent disagreements is culture and ethnicity.

Culture and ethnicity. Historically, investigations regarding disagreement between parents and adolescents have primarily involved white families from Western societies. Recently, more information has become available about parent-adolescent disagreements in families from more diverse cultural and ethnic groups (Barber, 1994; Romero et al., 2007; Yamada, 2009). Research into ethnic, racial and cultural variations in parent-adolescent disagreements has indicated that disagreements are less frequent in minority ethnic groups and in collectivistic cultures, although issues that lead to parent-adolescent disagreement seem to be similar across all ethnic, racial and cultural groups (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Rothbaum, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). An even more prominent finding that has come out of these cross-cultural studies is that regardless of ethnic group, conflict between parents and their children increases during adolescence and is more frequent compared with conflict between adolescents and their peers (Moilanen & Raffaelli, 2010).

Parent-adolescent disagreements in families of minority groups living in a majority culture usually emerge as a result of the incompatibility between the parents' adherence to the values and norms of the minority group and the adolescents' affinity with those of the new culture (Mesch, Turjeman, & Fishman, 2008). Chung, Flook and Fuligni (2009) conducted a longitudinal study of 415 adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years from ethnically diverse groups recruited from Latin American, Asian and European backgrounds. This study investigated how disagreements between parents and adolescents change on a daily basis. Chung et al. (2009) employed a daily diary method to assess the frequency of parent-adolescent disagreements across different ethnic groups. The main finding from this study was that adolescents of all ethnic backgrounds consistently reported a low frequency of family disagreements. A drawback of Chung et al.'s (2009) research, however, relates to the paucity of information regarding different aspects of family disagreements. Apart from frequency, no other important features of family disagreements, such as disagreement intensity, content and disagreement resolution strategies, were addressed.

Factors such as socio-economic disadvantage, bilingual environment, racial discrimination and prejudice have also been found to be associated with higher levels of parent-adolescent disagreement (Mesch et al., 2008; Romero et al., 2007). In a study of 1,828 households, Barber (1994) investigated parent-adolescent disagreement among American white, black and Hispanic families with at least one adolescent child between the age of 12 and 18 years. The National Survey of Families and Households (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988) was used as a source of data from which only the parents were recruited for participation in the study. Interviews were conducted with a randomly selected parent from each family while their spouse or cohabiting partner was given a questionnaire to complete in their own time. The results revealed that parent-adolescent disagreement among the three ethnic groups did not substantially vary in regard to the discussed topics, the amount of daily

disagreement, and social and personal elements of parent-adolescent disagreement. Parents from white, black and Hispanic families reported that issues concerning everyday life generated the most amount of disagreement while the least amount of disagreement involved topics concerning sex and drug use. Further to this finding, the amount of daily disagreement was also found to be similar across the three ethnic groups. Barber explained this as a reflection of a combination of some universal conditions that all families experience, regardless of their ethnic or cultural origin. In Barbers' view, adolescent's problem history, adolescent's negative personality and negative parenting practices are the strongest predictors of parent-adolescent disagreement. However, relying on a single source of information, in this case parents' reports, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the extent of the correlation between the disagreement predictors and the levels of disagreement in the families of different ethnic groups. Thus it is unclear whether negative parenting is a result of parents' efforts to diffuse their child's negative character or whether such disciplinary practices have contributed to the development of adolescents' negative character.

Conversely, lack of the adolescents' appraisals of the factors influencing disagreement with their parents adds to the limited clarity about the historical context of adolescents' behaviour problems. The most significant cultural difference yielded by this study was the overall frequency of disagreement reported by the parents. Parents from both black and Hispanic families indicated much lower levels of disagreement compared to the reports provided by the parents from white families. Moreover, parents from the two minority groups, and particularly parents from the Hispanic families, expressed markedly higher expectations of their children than the parents from the white families. According to Barber, lower levels of reported parent-adolescent disagreement in the minority families may reflect higher expectations of the adolescents to conform and comply to authority of their parents to ensure stronger survival in the cultural majority. Barber suggested that this cultural trend of

reporting less intergenerational disagreement might also be a reflection of the participants' bias toward social desirability. However, in Barber's view, the possibility that minority parents might see low levels of disagreement with their adolescent children as socially desirable may provide important information about the way these or other ethnic groups and cultures perceive and approach parent-adolescent disagreement.

Although Barber's study represents a step forward in the attempt to better explicate contextual and cultural variations in parent-adolescent disagreement, the application of the findings is limited to the families from dominant and non-dominant ethnic groups in the United States. To explore the impact of cultural norms and values on different levels of parent-adolescence disagreement, Shek (2002) carried out a study that investigated parent-adolescent disagreement in Chinese families living in Hong Kong. Specifically, the author concentrated on the relationship between adolescents' descriptions of parenting characteristics and adolescents' and parents' descriptions of parent-adolescent disagreement. The study was designed as a longitudinal investigation of 378 intact families with the adolescents' mean age of 13 years at Time 1 and 14 years at Time 2. Adolescents' reports of parenting characteristics, adolescents' reports of parent-adolescent disagreement and parents' reports of disagreement were collected within a yearlong interval between Time 1 and Time 2. The same assessment tools were administered at both time intervals. Paternal Treatment Scale and Maternal Treatment Scale (Chan, 1981; Ginsbur et al., 1970; Shek, 1998a) comprising 15 identical items were used to assess adolescents' perceptions of global treatment by their parents (warm versus cold, stern versus mild, etc.). Lamborn et al.'s (1991) 19-item scale was used to assess adolescents' perceptions of specific parenting practices along the dimensions of parents' degree of responsiveness and parents' degree of demandingness. Both the child and parent version of Robin and Foster's (1989)

Disagreement Behaviour Questionnaire was used to measure adolescents' and parents' perspective of disagreement between parents and adolescents.

Overall, the results of Shek's investigation confirmed his hypothesis that adolescents' perceptions of parenting are closely related to the perceptions of parent-adolescent disagreement held by both parents and adolescents. As a result of the longitudinal analysis of the influence of the parent-adolescent disagreement on parenting practices, the study revealed that in Chinese families, parent-adolescent disagreement seems to be a factor which precipitates changes in parenting characteristics. This was further supported by the findings regarding parent-adolescent disagreement and changes in parenting practices of mothers and fathers. Father-adolescent disagreement was found to reduce fathers' responsiveness and concern. Consequent to the increase in parent-adolescent disagreement, parental demandingness and harsh discipline were also found to increase in both mothers and fathers. However, intergenerational disagreement was found to elicit greater harshness in fathers than mothers while more demandingness was elicited in mothers than fathers. Consistent with his predictions, the author also found that negative perceptions of parenting characteristics of girls at Time 1 predicted greater levels of disagreement at Time 2 indicating the greater pressures placed on girls to fulfil the traditional responsibilities of their gender role. In conclusion, the author pointed to the bidirectional effect of the study findings that parent-adolescent disagreement may simultaneously be an antecedent to the parenting characteristics as well as their resultant phenomenon. However, the actual causal relationship might be difficult to establish based on a yearlong interval between two time measurements, as an interval of one year may not have provided enough time for real developmental changes to be detected. More importantly, parenting characteristics were based on the assessments provided by the adolescent participants only. Additionally, assessment tools used to measure parenting characteristics focussed only on academic and interpersonal domains of parent-adolescent

interactions. Including measures of parenting, such as parents' expectations, behaviours and ways of resolving disagreement could have yielded more information about the differences in intergenerational disagreement in a Chinese culture. Lastly, only the families with both parents participated in this study. Different family structures tend to experience different levels of parent-adolescent disagreement, which was not shown in this study.

In light of the studies reviewed thus far, it appears that a parent centred approach to the process of child socialization has traditionally been promoted in ethnic minorities living in the United States and Asian cultures. Very few cross-cultural studies have explored these patterns outside the United States and Asian countries. A study conducted by Assadi, Smetana, Shahmansouri and Mohammadi (2011) was conducted to investigate the relationship between parental authority beliefs and parent-adolescent disagreement in a collectivistic society other than Asian. From the authors' perspective, Iran was chosen for its unique combination of traditional and modern societal norms and values. Participants in this study were 426 mothers ($M = 38$ years) of adolescent boys and girls aged approximately 14 years from various socio-demographic backgrounds. The hypotheses of the study were: a) that irrespective of socio-demographic influences, mothers would distinguish differential judgments of parental authority; b) that mothers would indicate having more authority over conventional issues (i.e., general social norms) and prudential issues (issues relating to comfort, safety and self-harm) than over personal issues (issues relating to one's privacy, control over body, decisions and choices); c) that mothers from socioeconomically disadvantaged families and mothers who hold traditional values would be more authoritarian, rather than authoritative, in their parenting; d) that authoritarian parenting would be associated with increased parent-adolescent disagreement; and e) that more disagreement would occur between mothers and their sons than mothers and their daughters due to a social bias toward boys being given more personal freedom. Fifty randomly selected students from

two schools within different districts were handed a sealed envelope containing a battery of questionnaires and an information sheet to give to their mothers. Mothers' self-reported information on the measures of parenting style, legitimacy of parental authority, parent-adolescent disagreement and mothers' general health yielded results that were consistent with the findings of other cross-cultural studies about universal and culture specific features of parent-adolescent disagreement (Fuligni et al., 2009; Shek, 2011). Iranian mothers differentiated among the three broad categories of issues relating to parenting authority (conventional, prudential and personal) but some of the items typically found in the conventional category in Western cultures, mainly manners and chores, were not treated as conventional in this sample of participants. Similarly, Iranian mothers saw choice of friends as a conventional rather than a personal issue, unlike their contemporaries from the United States. Mothers of Iranian adolescents see parents as having more authority over conventional and prudential issues but not so much over personal issues. This seems to be a reflection of parents' and adolescents' tendency to undermine personal issues, as they are usually perceived as factors leading to unnecessary disruption of family life (Assadi et al., 2011). The obtained results also provided support for the authors' hypothesis that Iranian mothers of lower socioeconomic scale and with less education were more authoritarian in their parenting and that this style of parenting was associated with a greater prevalence of parent-adolescent disagreement. Authoritarian parenting was nevertheless strongly promoted by Iranian mothers of other socio-demographic backgrounds suggesting that the traditional norms and values still play a significant role in shaping Iranian parents' beliefs about preferred parenting practices. In regard to the universal features of parent-adolescent disagreement, this study provides further support for the growing body of empirical investigations exploring the interaction between cultural and ethnic factors and parent-adolescent disagreement. Thus, according to the mothers' reports, Iranian adolescents seem to disagree with their parents

over everyday issues whereby their daily disagreements are low in frequency and moderate in intensity.

The results of the Assadi et al.'s (2011) study seem to be consistent with the trends highlighted by previous research (Barber, 1994; Shek, 2002). However, the degree to which these results may be reflective of the general Iranian public seems limited. Firstly, the findings are solely based on mothers' reports about parental authority and parent-adolescent disagreement. Research has shown that compared to fathers, mothers interact more with their adolescent children and consequently experience more intergenerational disagreement (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Smetana et al., 2006). Fathers' perceptions could, therefore, have added more value to the study's findings, particularly in light of the fact that Iranian society is patriarchal. Secondly, very little information has been provided regarding the intensity of the disagreement and how it varies across different topical issues. In the absence of the adolescents' views it is possible that the reported intensity might have been underrated. Thirdly, the research did not examine mothers' attitudes to disagreement resolution and their beliefs about different ways of ameliorating disagreement. This leads to the final implication of this study, which is a lack of information about the impact of parental authority and authoritarian parenting practices on adolescents in Iranian families.

Comparative research of individualistic and collectivistic cultures indicates that adolescents in non-Western societies experience moderate levels of disagreements with their parents and that for the most part, these disagreements revolve around the issues of authority and personal jurisdiction (Yau & Smetana, 2003; Zhang & Fuligni, 2006). Cross-cultural and cross-national studies have demonstrated that there are some ubiquitous features of parent-adolescent disagreement across all cultures and some that are specific to each society (Assadi, Smetana, Shahmansouri, & Mohammadi, 2011; Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2006). For instance, the overall frequency of intergenerational disagreement is low across cultures. Similarly,

parents and adolescents across different cultures tend to argue over mundane daily issues and their arguments are usually of moderate intensity. Variations in the level of parent-adolescent disagreement across different cultures and nations are found to be strongly related to parenting beliefs and practices. In that context, parents from collectivistic societies tend to score higher on measures of authoritarian parenting than the parents from individualistic cultures, as demonstrated by Barber's (1994) study. In families from collectivistic cultures, parents tend to exert increased parental control over their adolescents and tend to have high parental expectations regarding their adolescent's conformity and compliance to parental authority.

In summary, parent-adolescent disagreements have consistently been found across different cultures and ethnicities. A somewhat lower frequency of parent-adolescents disagreements has been reported in studies of adolescents from Asian culture than in studies of adolescents from American and European background. Reports of the issues that lead to usual parent-adolescent disagreements have also been identical across families from different cultural and ethnic groups.

Summary

Low to moderate levels of parent-adolescent disagreement are normal and commonly occur in relation to regular, day-to-day activities. While they might occur frequently, they rarely generate angry discussions. Interplay between individual and environmental factors seems to be associated with low to moderate levels of disagreement between parents and adolescents.

In regard to the individual factors, the many changes that adolescents experience on a physical, cognitive, emotional, self-definitional and social level play an important part in the occurrence of parent-adolescent disagreements. Salient physical transformations, substantial brain maturation, increase in negative affect, greater differentiation of self and greater

emphasis placed on friendships during adolescence are found to be strongly related to rise in the frequency of parent-adolescent disagreements. Adolescents' age contributes to an increase in parents-adolescent disagreements, however different features of parent-adolescent disagreement are differently affected by adolescents' age. Frequency of parent-adolescent disagreements is highest in early adolescence and lowest in late adolescence, while intensity is highest during middle adolescence. The topic of adolescents' autonomy and responsibilities is the most frequent cause for disagreement among families with early to middle adolescents, while peers and friendships is the most commonly found topic of disagreement in families of middle adolescents. Adolescents' gender is another individual aspect of adolescence associated with the increase in parent-adolescent disagreements with mother-daughter pairs experiencing more frequent disagreements than any other combination of parent-adolescent dyad. The most significant contribution to the increase in parent-adolescent disagreements stems from adolescents' need for more independence and autonomy. Less frequent parent-adolescent disagreements have been observed in families where adolescents' need for autonomy is managed appropriately by parents. However, more frequent disagreements have been documented in families where adolescents' need for more independence has come across parents' strong resistance to negotiate changes in their relationship. Further to the marked influence of autonomy on the relationship between parents and adolescents, the increase in parent-adolescent disagreements during adolescence has also been found to be related to parents' and adolescents' differing perception of autonomy. Despite a growing need for autonomy, adolescents want their parents to be engaged in their lives and to continue to influence them during adolescence. When the relationship between autonomy and parental influence is misunderstood, it can lead to more frequent parent-adolescent disagreements.

Environmental factors, including structural changes in families such as inter-parental conflict and marital dissolution, and socioeconomic disadvantage have been found to play a

mediating role in the escalation of parent-adolescent disagreement. These environmental factors are found to create heightened levels of stress in parents which in turn may have a spillover effect on parent-adolescent disagreements leading to escalation of the disagreements from low to high levels (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Smetana et al., 2006). The influence of both individual and environmental factors on parent-adolescent disagreements has universally been reported by families across different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Although the literature related to possible determinants of different levels of parent-adolescent disagreement is extensive, the factors that contribute the most to parent-adolescent conflict, as opposed to parent-adolescent disagreement are still inconclusive. Some studies emphasise the importance of parenting styles in regard to the difference in the levels of parent-adolescent conflict, while others point to the way parents and adolescents tend to resolve their conflict as a contributing factor to escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high level of conflict (Laursen & Hafen, 2010). Therefore, a review of the extant literature and research findings in the area of the relationship between parent-adolescent disagreements and parenting styles will follow in the next chapter, after which a review of the literature relating to parent-adolescent disagreements and conflict resolution strategies will be undertaken.

Chapter 3: Parenting Styles

Although an adolescent's personal characteristics as well as environmental factors surrounding adolescent development may contribute to escalation of normal parent-adolescent disagreements into high levels of conflict, the escalation of disagreements is also found to be a function of the way parents respond to the adolescent's changing developmental needs (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Smetana, 2011). For an adequate response to the adolescent changing needs to occur, renegotiation of family roles and realignment of parent-child interactions is necessary. Providing a safe, warm and affectionate family environment within which adolescents are encouraged to explore their developing physical, cognitive, emotional and social potentials is one aspect of the task of realigning parent-adolescent interactions (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Renk et al., 2005; Riesch et al., 2000; Smetana, 2011). The other, more delicate aspect, is the one of parents creating a balance between supervising and setting limits around adolescents' activities and granting adolescents greater independence and autonomy (Özmete & Bayoglu, 2009). The delicate nature of renegotiating family roles most prominently manifests in this second task due to adolescents seeking more autonomy than the parents might be willing or ready to provide (Dekovic, 1999).

Provision of Safe, Warm and Affectionate Environment

To date, the most influential model of parenting styles is the one proposed by Baumrind (1991). This model categorises parents into four styles of parenting based on their level of responsiveness and demandingness and includes authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and indifferent parenting style. According to this model, parents who endorse high levels of both responsiveness and demandingness are perceived as *authoritative*. These parents are warm, supportive, accepting of adolescents' autonomy and individuality but also firm and demand a degree of supervision over adolescents' behaviours (Collins & Steinberg,

2006; Smetana et al., 2006). A parenting style that is characterised by a high level of demandingness and low level of responsiveness is labelled *authoritarian*. Authoritarian parenting favours restriction of adolescents' autonomy and encourages obedience and conformity by the use of punitive disciplinary methods (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Contrary to the authoritarian style, the *indulgent* style of parenting is typically characterised by high level of responsiveness whereby adolescents are granted a lot of freedom and very few demands. The style of parenting represented by minimal interaction between parents and adolescents due to parents' low level of demandingness and responsiveness, is termed *indifferent* (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). In some cases indifferent parents may be neglectful of their adolescent children, however, this is not a common occurrence and represents an extreme of this style of parenting (Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

It has been well-established that adolescents from families with authoritative parenting fare better on a number of psychosocial outcomes compared to adolescents from families with authoritarian, indulgent and indifferent parenting (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Smetana et al., 2006; Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Adolescents raised in families with authoritative parenting are found to be more self-assured and self-reliant, are better skilled at forming friendships and relationships and are better academic achievers (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Liem, Cavell, Cohen, & Lustig, 2010). In their study of 475 adolescents aged between 18 and 22 years, McKinney and Renk (2008) found that paternal and maternal authoritative parenting was positively correlated with high self-esteem and negatively correlated with symptoms of depression and anxiety in late adolescence. Petito and Cummins (2000) found in their study of 279 adolescents, aged 12 to 17 years, that authoritative parenting was strongly linked with the adolescents' reports of high levels of subjective quality of life conceptualised as adolescents' perception of their well-being, health, intimacy, productivity, safety, place in community and emotional well-being. Conversely, the

adolescents who perceived their parents to be authoritarian and indifferent in their parenting reported low levels of subjective quality of life. The findings from the two studies are supported by the extant literature showing that adolescents from authoritarian families tend to achieve low scores on measures of psychological and social outcomes and have a higher tendency to experience psychosocial problems such as depression, substance use and delinquent behaviour (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

The benefits of authoritative parenting have further been demonstrated in studies that compared consistent parenting in which neither parent was authoritative with inconsistent parenting with at least one authoritative parent (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). In one such study, conducted by Fletcher, Steinberg, and Sellers (1999), 514 students were administered a self-report survey at two time intervals a year apart. The survey measured adolescents' academic achievements and levels of psychological distress and revealed that adolescents with two authoritative parents reported greater academic achievements and lower levels of psychological distress than the adolescents with one authoritative parent. An even more significant finding that emerged from the study was that adolescents from the families with inconsistent parenting where at least one parent was authoritative received better grades and dedicated more time and attention to their school performance than the adolescents from the families with consistent parenting where no parent was authoritative. The positive outcomes of inconsistent parenting with one authoritative parent have also been linked to a reduction in behaviour problems in adolescents from families where harsh discipline is used. For example, DeVet (1997) demonstrated in her study of 253 adolescents ages 22 years and younger, that the impact of harsh discipline and physical punishment on adolescent psychological adjustment was lessened when one of the parents was authoritative.

To better understand positive parental influences of authoritative parenting compared to authoritarian, indulgent and indifferent parenting styles on adolescents' psychological

adjustment, a shift from exploring parenting styles to exploring specific parenting practices within each style has been made in the last decade of the research in parent-adolescent relationships (Smetana, 2011; Smetana et al., 2006). What seems to set the authoritative parenting apart from the other parenting styles is a well-balanced relationship between parental warmth, parental discipline, communication and parents' engagement in adolescents' lives (Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Collins, 2006). Parental warmth has been found to serve as a buffer against harsh discipline as demonstrated in a study by McKee, Roland, Coffelt, Olson, Forehand, Massari, and Zens (2007). Using a sample of 2,582 parents and their 10 and 11 years old adolescents, the authors examined the relationship between verbally and physically harsh discipline and internalising and externalising problems in adolescents. Findings from the study demonstrated that only one aspect of positive parenting, parental warmth, served as a protective factor against harsh parental discipline. The authors suggested that instead of promoting positive parenting per se, more effort should be made in eliminating harsh discipline while promoting positive parenting, in particular parental warmth.

The effectiveness of parental warmth was documented in another study conducted by Fletcher, Steinberg, and Williams (2004). Data collected from 2,568 adolescents between 14 and 18 years of age showed that substance use was significantly lower among adolescents from families with warm parents. Apart from the parental warmth, the same study also revealed that parental discipline, in particular parental control and monitoring, were equally important factors in lowering adolescents' substance use and delinquent behaviour. The study showed that parental monitoring and control allow for greater parental knowledge about adolescents' whereabouts and behaviours as parents actively seek information from adolescents in an effort to establish appropriate guidelines and control. Thus, the study highlighted that sufficient knowledge about adolescents' daily activities achieved through

parental provision of warmth and monitoring has positive effect on adolescents being less likely to engage in substance use.

The findings from Fletcher et al. (2004) study are consistent with the research in parental monitoring which suggests that parental knowledge is a product of parents' effort to gather that knowledge (Crouter & Head, 2002). However, the findings regarding the parents' active role in seeking knowledge seem to neglect adolescents' active agency in this process. Literature on parent-adolescent relationships proposes that knowledge about adolescents' daily activities is partly shaped by the parents' active engagement in eliciting the needed information but partly by the adolescents' decision about how much of their life they want to share with their parents (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Additionally, the choice about whether to disclose or withhold information seems to be determined by adolescents' experience of how parents have reacted to disclosure of similar information in the past (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, & Bosdet, 2005). This is best illustrated by the findings from a longitudinal study of 982 adolescents, age between 13 and 15 years, conducted by Tilton-Weaver et al. (2010). The study showed that when parents behaved in an angry, cold, critical and rejecting manner to adolescents past instances of disclosing wrongdoing, adolescents reported feeling more controlled and less connected to their parents and consequently chose to withhold rather than share information with their parents. Conversely, adolescents who described their parents as warm and understanding toward their past disclosure of wrongdoing stated they felt more connected and less controlled by their parents and consequently continued to share and disclose information about their daily activities. Although the study relied on a single source of information it nevertheless demonstrated the importance of treating both parents and adolescents as active agents regarding information management of adolescents' daily life. It further demonstrated how parenting may compromise the process of adolescents' willingness to disclose or withhold information about their daily activities. Negative parental

reactions to adolescents' disclosure may lead to less communication between parents and adolescents whereas positive parenting encourages adolescents' willingness to disclose information helpful for parents to better monitor and control their children's activities and behaviours.

How individual parenting practices, specifically parental discipline, communication and involvement of family members, affect parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent psychological adjustment is further demonstrated in an investigation conducted by Lee, Daniels and Kissinger (2006). The authors explored how the identified practices would affect adolescents' self-concept, locus of control and academic achievements in a sample of 7,866 adolescents and their parents derived from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS:88, 2002). Parents' responses to five variables including decision making, discussions, involvement, expectations and family rule were used to operationalise clusters of different parenting practices. Adolescents' responses on the measures of self-concept, locus of control and academic achievement were used to assess adolescent adjustment outcomes. The most common cluster of parenting practices was one that corresponded most closely to the authoritative style of parenting. These parents displayed high parental involvement, frequently engaged in discussions about school with their adolescents, had reasonable expectations of their children and enforced reasonable standard of family rules. Adolescents from these families were found to have a more positive self-concept, achieved better school grades and demonstrated an internal locus of control. In the second most common cluster of parenting practices, low scores on decision-making indicated that parents make most decisions independent of their adolescents. Parents' moderate to high scores on discussion, involvement, expectation and family rules were found to have a positive impact on adolescents' self-concept and internal locus of control but were negatively associated with adolescents' scores on maths and reading assessments.

In the third cluster of parenting practices, identified to correspond to neglectful parenting style, parents displayed low levels of parental involvement, discussion and expectations. These parents scored low on family rules and decision making indicating that most decisions are made by their adolescent children. Adolescents from this cluster of parenting practices showed low self-concept and low internal locus of control and their math and reading scores were lower than those of the adolescents from clusters one and two. The last cluster corresponded to the authoritarian parenting style. Parents from this cluster indicated that they make most decisions independent of their adolescents and have high expectations from their adolescents to obey the family rules. These parents displayed minimal parental involvement and rarely engaged in discussions with their adolescent children. Adolescents from this parenting cluster displayed less positive self-concept and had lower internal locus of control compared to the adolescents from clusters 1 and 2. Their maths and reading scores were also found to be lower than those of the cluster 1 adolescents. Based on their findings the authors suggested that the advantage of knowing specific patterns of parenting practices is twofold. Firstly, identifying ineffective parenting practices allows for these practices to be replaced with more effective ones. Secondly, implementation of productive parenting practices leads to a development of a healthy concept of self and social competences in adolescents and brings more adaptability and communication into families.

As the above reported studies illustrate, creating and maintaining warm, supportive and affectionate environment plays a crucial role in adolescents' healthy psychosocial development. Authoritative parenting comprises all these elements and as such offers benefits that surpass those of authoritarian, indulgent and indifferent parenting styles. In addition to parental warmth, appropriate parental monitoring, communication and parental involvement in adolescents' lives create less opportunity for adolescents to engage in problematic behaviours and greater likelihood of better psychosocial and academic outcomes. The

evidence in support of the benefits of authoritative parenting practices for adolescent healthy development stems from the research focused on identification of specific parenting practices. Distinguishing parenting practices that are beneficial for adolescents' healthy development from those that hinder such development is important as it provides an impetus for a necessary realignment of the parent-adolescent relationship. However, provision of a warm, supportive environment with adequate parental monitoring only partly satisfies the demands of renegotiating roles within the family during adolescence. Adequate granting of autonomy during adolescence has been identified as another factor which may pose a challenge for the successful re-establishment of parent-adolescent relationships as illustrated in the following section of this chapter.

Establishment of Balance between Supervision and Autonomy Granting

The second task of renegotiating family roles involves creating a balance between parental monitoring and accommodating adolescents' need for more autonomy while allowing adolescents to continue to feel connected to their family (Dekovic, 1999; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005; Smetana, 2011; Steinberg 2001). Inadequate parenting practices (e.g., low responsiveness) and negative parenting practices (e.g., harsh verbal and physical discipline) may prevent families from achieving the necessary balance and may lead to increased parent-adolescent disagreements, and in some cases an escalation of the disagreements into high levels of conflict (Shek, 2002). For example, in a longitudinal study by Rueter and Conger (1995), who followed 335 families with adolescent children ($M = 12.7$ years), a strong association was found between hostile and emotionally distant family environments and an increase in parent-adolescent conflict. On the other hand, normal parent-adolescent disagreements and low levels of parent-adolescent conflict were found in supportive and warm family environments. Similarly, negative parenting practices such as humiliation, sarcasm and pejorative name-calling were found to lead to high levels of parent-adolescent

conflict in Caples and Barrera (2006) study of 232 Caucasian and Hispanic mothers and the same number of 11 to 15 year old adolescents.

The context within which parent-adolescent disagreements arise not only influences the valence of disagreements but also whether disagreements have a positive or negative effect on adolescents' psychological adjustment. Family disagreements that occur within supportive parent-adolescent relationships are considered to have constructive and positive outcomes for adolescent adjustment while family disagreements that occur within unstable parents-adolescent relationships are considered to have detrimental and negative outcomes for adolescent adjustment (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Kim, Conger, Lorenz, & Elder, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). A study of 469, 11 to 18 year old adolescents, conducted by Adams and Laursen (2007) investigates how conflict frequency and perceived relationship qualities with parents influence adolescents' adjustment problems and school performance. Although the authors conceptualised conflict as disagreement of all sorts they differentiated between low, medium and high levels of conflict to better delineate what happens at each level of disagreement for adolescents' psychological well-being as a function of different parent-adolescent relationships. The authors hypothesised that high levels of parent-adolescent conflict would be associated with lower grades and more adjustment problems (aggression, anxiety, depression, delinquency, withdrawal) when the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship is perceived to be negative. Low to moderate levels of parent-adolescent conflict were hypothesised to be linked with good grades and fewer adjustment problems when the relationship quality is perceived to be positive.

The study findings supported the authors' predictions as no adverse effects of increase from a low to a moderate level of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescent psychological and academic adjustment outcomes were found. For those adolescents who reported negative perception of family relationship escalation of parent-adolescent conflict from a low to a

moderate level was found to be associated with poorer academic achievements and greater delinquency and withdrawal. The authors also found that negative and not positive family interactions, accounted for negative associations between conflict and adolescent outcomes, suggesting that positive perceptions toward a family member may not be sufficient for successful resolution of parent-adolescent conflict. Additionally, high levels of parent-adolescent conflict were found to be detrimental to both good and poor quality relationships with better quality relationships being more adversely affected. The authors explained that in families characterised by good quality relationships the excess negativity associated with the rise in frequency of parent-adolescent conflict has a disruptive effect on family harmony by generating an environment of mistrust and apprehension. Although the findings from Adams and Laursen's (2007) study were based on the reports provided by a single source and relied on a general evaluation of parenting styles (i.e., positive or negative relationship quality) they offer compelling findings in support of the argument that the parent-adolescent relationship has a strong influence on disagreements between parents and adolescents and their subsequent impact on adolescents' overall adjustment.

The effect of different parenting styles on parent-adolescent disagreements and their impact on adolescent psychosocial outcomes is better appreciated with the inclusion of findings from the studies that focus on specific parenting practices. One such study, carried out by Shek (2002), included both parents' and adolescents' reports of parent-adolescent conflict and adolescents' descriptions of both general and specific parenting characteristics. The study was conducted as a year-long investigation of 378 intact Chinese families and their adolescents whose mean age was 13 years at Time 1 and 14 years at Time 2. The results of Shek's investigation confirmed the hypothesis that adolescents' perceptions of parenting are closely related to the perceptions of parent-adolescent conflict held by both parents and adolescents. This was found to be consistent when measures of both general and specific

parenting characteristics were used. The results further revealed that parent-adolescent conflict is influenced by and also does influence parenting characteristics. In terms of the father-adolescent relationship the conflict was found to reduce responsiveness and concern and elicit greater harshness and demand in fathers. In terms of the mother-adolescent relationship the increase in parent-adolescent conflict was associated with an increase in mother's demandingness. The study thus indicates that adolescents' and parents' perceptions of global and specific parenting practices are closely linked to their perceptions of parent-adolescent conflict. The bidirectional effect of parent-adolescent conflict, namely that that parent-adolescent conflict may simultaneously precipitate parenting characteristics as well as being their resultant phenomenon, has emerged as another conclusion from the study. However, the actual causal relationship might be difficult to establish as the study was based on a semi-longitudinal investigation of one year. Most longitudinal studies encompass longer time intervals to detect any substantial change in measured variables.

In her study of 142 European American families with adolescent children aged between 13 and 17 years, Sorkhabi (2010) argued that another specific parenting practice, parents' use of reason and explanation, is an important factor in the escalation of the disagreements into higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict. The author's argument is supported by the developmental literature that claims that successful renegotiation of parent-adolescent relationships deems necessary for parents to change their parenting practices, specifically to permit adolescents to engage more in family decision making, to increase the use of reasoning and explanation during parent-adolescent disagreements and to allow adolescents more autonomy in their personal life (Baumrind, 2005; Lamborn, Dornbush, & Steinberg, 1996; Smetana, 2002, 2011). As these changes are usually found to occur within authoritative parenting, Sorkhabi (2010) predicted that in contrast to the authoritative style, the lack of reasoning within authoritarian style of parenting and inconsistent use of reason by

the indulgent and indifferent parenting styles, would lead to an increase in parent-adolescent conflict and ineffective resolution of the conflict. Based on this assumption the author carried out interviews with parents and adolescents which demonstrated consistent and significant variation in the frequency of parent-adolescent conflict across different types of parenting styles. Authoritative parents' use of reason and their willingness to allow their adolescents to use reason when arguing was found to be linked with greater harmony and less frequent parent-adolescent conflict. Sorkhabi (2010) suggests that unlike the other three groups of parenting styles, authoritative parenting promotes mutual respect for, and interest in maintaining opposing views, reciprocal clarification of differing viewpoints, parental support of adolescent autonomy and parental willingness to accommodate adolescents' perspectives.

Parental support together with parental monitoring and control have also been identified as specific parenting practices with significant contribution to successful renegotiation of family roles and prevention of high conflict in a cross cultural study by Ciairano, Kliewer, Bonino and Bosma (2008). Three hundred and ninety-one Italian adolescents and three hundred and seventy-three Dutch adolescents, aged between 15 and 19 years participated in the study which aimed to explore the link between adolescents' perceptions of parental support and parental control and measures of adolescents' psychological discomfort, positive self-perception and future success expectations. The Italian and Dutch cultures were selected for their vast differences in relation to parenting norms as well as the differences in parenting norms of these two cultures compared to the North American culture. All measures were assessed with The Health Behaviour Questionnaire (Jessor, Donovan, & Costa, 1991), which was translated in Italian and Dutch and adapted to the two cultures. The results of this study demonstrated that parental support is associated with positive outcomes of adolescent adjustment while parental control is associated with poorer outcomes of adolescent adjustment. However, the effects of parental

support on psychological discomfort and future success expectations were moderated when parental control, age and sex were included. For example, for older Dutch boys from families with firm, warm and involved parents, psychological discomfort was high, compared with younger Dutch boys and girls. The authors suggested that Dutch adolescents are socialised to be independent and that high parental control during later years of adolescents may elicit more adverse reactions. In the Italian sample, when the interaction between parental control, parental support and psychological adjustment was assessed no psychological discomfort was reported by adolescents. The authors explained that different socialisation of Italian youth compared to socialisation of Dutch and North American youth may have contributed to this finding. Ciairano et al. (2008) concluded that the relationship between parental support, parental control and adolescent psychological adjustment is complex and varies across sex, age and culture.

The similar effect of sex and age on adolescents' experience of disagreements with their parents within different family environments was also found in an Australian study of cross-cultural influences on parental factors and adolescent psychological adjustment. Heaven and Goldstein (2001) studied the relationship between parental bond and parental discipline and adolescents' self-esteem and depression among Anglo-Australians and Asian-Australians. Data was collected from 242 adolescents aged between 13 to 18 years and, of those who identified themselves as Asian-Australians, 25 were born in Australia and 85 were born elsewhere. The study revealed that lower self-esteem and higher depression scores were more prevalent among the reports from the Asian-Australian youth and females than Anglo-Australian youth and males. For Anglo-Australian youth who reported being exposed to parental withdrawal of love and care, low self-esteem and elevated depression levels were found. However, the absence of a main effect of parenting on either depression or self-esteem was found among Asian-Australians. This finding seems to suggest that parenting factors

may be less influential on the mental health of Asian-Australian youth compared to their Anglo-Australian counterparts, which contradicts claims that the parental control, obedience and strict discipline often found in collectivistic cultures is viewed by adolescents as offering low parental care (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Cui & Conger, 2008; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005; Kotchick & Forehand, 2002; Smetana et al., 2006). The differences in the mental health of the Asian- and Anglo-Australian youth in this study was accounted for by the participants' age with older Asian adolescents experiencing more mental health related problems. The authors suggested that older Asian-Australian youth, particularly those not born in Australia, may find it more difficult to identify as Australians and consequently feel more isolated and marginalised which may lead to greater prevalence of mental health problems. In conclusion the study supports previous research findings that family processes have a significant influence on adolescents' self-esteem and depression and that this effect is observed in both Anglo- and Asian-Australians. The degree to which these effects are present in the two cultures varies as a function of adolescents' sex and age.

A close examination of a number of specific parenting practices and their influence on adolescents' psychological development was conducted by Vazsonyi and Belliston (2006) in their study of 6,935 adolescents aged between 15 and 19 years recruited from the Netherlands, Hungary, Switzerland and the United States conducted. The authors aimed to investigate how closeness, support, monitoring, communication, parent-adolescent conflict and peer approval affect adolescent anxiety and symptoms of depression. Additionally, parenting practices of both mothers and fathers were compared to shed more light on the possibility of differential contribution of maternal and paternal parenting to adolescents' psychological adjustment. The reason authors included adolescents' description of the parenting practices of both their parents is that a large number of studies use either mothers' reports or adolescents' descriptions of mothers parenting more so than those of fathers. The

self-reported data demonstrated the best predictors of adolescent internalising problems are parental support and parent-adolescent conflict insofar that internalising problems were negatively associated with both paternal and maternal support while parent-adolescent conflict was positively associated with adolescent internalising problems. Compared to the Heaven and Goldstein (2001) results regarding the cultural differences the findings of the Vazsonyi and Belliston (2006) study were more clear-cut due to the association between individual parenting processes and measures of internalising problems in adolescents being similar across all cultures and developmental stages of adolescence. Vazsonyi and Belliston (2006) conclude that adolescents exposed to less supportive and coercive family environments tend to experience more conflictual interactions with their parents, which places them at a greater risk of developing symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Chaplin et al. (2012) attempted to explain how poor parenting practices are linked to increased parent-adolescent disagreements in the context of adolescents' alcohol use. Several studies have found that inadequate parenting practices, particularly low levels of parental warmth and monitoring and inappropriate discipline lead to increased use of alcohol in adolescents (Clark, Thatcher, & Maisto, 2005; Dodge et al., 2009; Tildesley & Andrews, 2008). The literature purports that poor parenting practices create unsupportive, hostile family climate often characterised by higher levels of parent-adolescent conflicts and that in this climate adolescents' physiological arousal is more likely to escalate (Erath, El-Sheikh, & Cummings, 2009). Furthermore, adolescents' heart rate and levels of stress hormone cortisol are found to be higher after the adolescents had an argument with their parents (Hops, Tildesley, Lightensten, Ary, & Sherman, 1990). Chaplin et al. (2002) theorised that adolescents' elevated feelings of emotional arousal and discomfort have a potential to create a risk for adolescents to seek behaviours that could possibly alleviate these feelings such as alcohol use. The researchers examined parenting behaviours (support, structure and criticism)

in relation to parent-adolescent conflict, adolescents' emotional and physiological response (heart rate, blood pressure and stress hormone level) and adolescents' current alcohol use in 58 parent-adolescent dyads. Parents and their adolescent children whose age ranged between 10 to 16 years attended three sessions a week in a laboratory setting during which they completed a battery of questionnaires, computer tasks and interviews. Adolescents' heart rate and emotional arousal, anger in particular, were found to be elevated during conflict interactions in those families that displayed insufficient warmth, support and structure. Conversely, low levels of emotional and physiological response to parent-adolescent conflict were recorded for the adolescents from families who provided warm and supportive parenting in which limit setting and clear rule explanations are regularly used. The study findings go beyond the confirmation of the previous research insofar as they explain how low levels of parental involvement, support and emotional closeness between parents and adolescents may lead to adolescents' use of alcohol as a function of their increased negative emotional and physiological arousal. In an attempt to alleviate the negative physiological response to unsupportive parenting practices adolescent may turn to behaviours such as alcohol use which may in itself have further implications for parent-adolescent relationship.

However, not all adolescents resort to alcohol use or other measures to diminish the effects of parent-adolescent conflict. Research that focuses on identification of protective factors has shown that multiple buffering factors that range from a child's resilience to the type of family environment in which the child is being raised can make a marked difference in the way adolescents deal with disagreements (Darling, 2008). This proposition was explored in a study by Formoso, Gonzales and Aiken (2000) who investigated what types of protective factors including mother-, father- and peer-adolescent relationship and maternal and paternal monitoring and mother or father, may be more beneficial to adolescents when exposed to stressful situations such as family conflict. The rationale behind this aim was that

if parent-adolescent conflict is related to volatile family relationships then supportive family relationships are necessary to protect adolescents from the stress associated with family conflict. Similarly, if peer relationships provide stability and support to adolescents who live in families with high level of parent-adolescent conflict then it is important to continue to foster such relationships outside home. In regard to the protective role mothers and fathers have in the life of their adolescents, the study set out to examine whether both parents may provide adolescents with the same protection against the stress related to parent-adolescent conflict. Further to the first aim, the study also investigated whether the influence of protective factors varied as a function of adolescent gender and ethnicity. The sample for this study was comprised of 284 adolescents whose age ranged between 10 and 16 years. Participants were multiethnic from Mexican-American, Anglo-American, African-American and to a small degree Asian- and Native-American and were predominantly from low-income families. The study results yielded several findings, firstly that the family conflict was positively related to the conduct problems and depression in adolescents while parental attachment and monitoring were negatively related. On the other hand, parental attachment and monitoring moderated the relationship between family conflict and conduct problems, while no moderation was observed for depression. Secondly, while parental attachment and monitoring operated as protective factors against conduct problems for girls they were found to be detrimental for boys. Thirdly, the relationship between family conflict and adolescent psychological outcomes was moderated in both maternal-adolescent and paternal-adolescent relationships, which showed that both parents are equally able to be positively involved in the lives of their children. Moreover, peer relationship compared to parental relationship had no impact on the relationship between family conflict and adolescent conduct problems. Lastly, participants' ethnicity had no significant effect on the link between parental attachment and monitoring, and family conflict. Based on the results of their study, the authors suggest that

parents play a significant role in protecting adolescents from the adverse effects of family conflict and that positive, stable and supportive family relationships can reduce the impact of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescents' psychological adjustment.

Summary

Parenting, in addition to adolescents' individual and environmental factors, plays a significant role in adolescents' individual development and in the development of parent-adolescent relationships. Parenting style characterised by parental warmth, responsiveness and support carried out against a background of consistent parental supervision and monitoring represents an environment most adequate for adolescents to develop into autonomous individuals while feeling connected to their parents. This type of parenting is classified as authoritative according to the Baumrind (1991) model of typology of parenting styles. Findings from the studies reviewed in this chapter indicate that adolescents from the families whose parents use an authoritative parenting style have better self-esteem and self-confidence, are better socially adjusted, are less likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression, engage less in substance use and delinquent behaviours and perform well in school compared to their counterparts from families with authoritarian, indulgent and indifferent parenting styles. An adequate combination of parental warmth and parental discipline has been attributed to beneficial outcomes for adolescent psychological adjustment. Parental warmth and parental discipline create an opportunity for both parents and adolescents to be active agents in sharing knowledge about each other's daily lives. Adolescents are more willing to disclose information about their activities and whereabouts when their parents respond with care and understanding. Likewise, parents gain greater knowledge when they actively seek information in an attempt to establish appropriate boundaries around adolescents' behaviour.

Parenting has been found to have further implications for the way parents and adolescents come to disagree with one another. Normal parent-adolescent disagreements are found in families characterised by supportive and warm environment while the disagreements are found to escalate into high parent-adolescent conflict within emotionally cold and distant family environments. Similarly, when parent-adolescent disagreements occur within positive family environments they tend to have beneficial outcomes for adolescent psychological development (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2000). For example, adolescents from such families are successful in their academic achievements and have fewer adjustment problems (e.g., aggression, anxiety, depression and behaviour related problems). The benefits of this type of parenting are attributed to reciprocal use of reasoning and explanation during disagreements, encouragement of mutual respect and interest for differing viewpoints and accommodation of adolescents' need for more autonomy, factors most commonly found in families with authoritative style of parenting. When parent-adolescent disagreements occur within unsupportive family environments they tend to have deleterious effect on adolescent psychological development. Adolescents from these families experience difficulties with their school progress and with social and psychological adjustment. These conclusions have been drawn from the studies investigating the effect of both global and specific parenting practices as well as cross-cultural studies. Further to this point, findings from the reviewed studies, which focused on factors which can protect adolescents against the deleterious effects of parent-adolescent conflict and as such, impact on adolescents' adjustment, revealed that both mothers and fathers are equally capable of protecting their children from the stress associated with parent-adolescent conflict.

In conclusion, parenting, encompassing both global and specific parenting practices, has a significant impact on the process of shaping parent-adolescent interactions. Warm, supportive parenting that encompasses appropriate parental monitoring and supervision leads

to the occurrence of normal parent-adolescent disagreements. However, the disagreements tend to escalate into high conflict when the interactions between parents and adolescents lack these elements. Yet, some studies show that even in the warm and supportive environments the escalation of parent-adolescents disagreements into high conflict can be observed. The studies further demonstrate that the increase in parent-adolescent disagreements tends to have a more harmful effect on the positive parent-adolescents relationships due to the family interactions becoming more distrustful. Therefore, parenting as significant as it is in changing the quality of parent-adolescent interactions may not provide sufficient explanation for the observed change. It is possible that the way parents and adolescents tend to resolve their disagreements determines whether the disagreements remain at a normal, healthy level or whether they escalate into high conflict, which is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Conflict Resolution Strategies

Escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high level parent-adolescent conflicts may be linked more to the way disagreements are resolved, than to their content (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). The way parents and adolescents manage disagreements is regarded to have a functional or dysfunctional role in adolescent psychosocial adjustment and well-being (Sillars, Canary, & Tafoya, 2004; Smetana et al., 2006; Steinberg, 2001). Use of constructive methods of resolving disagreements is associated with positive psychological adjustment in adolescents whereas use of ineffective resolution skills is associated with adolescent internalising and externalising psychosocial problems (Branje, Van Doorn, Van der Valk, & Meeus, 2009; Smetana et al., 2006). Understanding how utilization of different conflict resolution strategies influences adolescent psychological adjustment is important for two reasons. One is that adolescents learn conflict resolution skills within the context of their family where they get a chance to practice those skills (Parke & Buriel, 2006). The other is that resolution skills acquired within the family context can spill over into other relationships, such as friendships and romantic relationships (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Sillars et al., 2004; Steinberg, 2001).

However, circumstances under which some families use constructive and others use destructive conflict resolution skills are not yet well understood. In the current literature, a much greater focus has been placed on examining how family context (i.e., parenting) affects parent-adolescent disagreements, rather than on how the use of different conflict resolution strategies affects parent-adolescent disagreements. The research which examines how the use of different conflict resolution strategies might influence escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high level of conflict has come to a number of conclusions related to three main areas of investigation. The first conclusion is that a range of different resolution

strategies are used by families in their attempts to resolve parent-adolescent disagreements (La Valley & Guerrero, 2010). The second conclusion is that differential use of conflict resolution strategies varies as a function of adolescents' age and gender, parents' gender and different perceptions adolescents and parents hold about their disagreements (Tucker, Mchale, & Crouter, 2003). The third conclusion is that adolescents' psychological adjustment and well-being is influenced by different conflict resolution strategies (Tucker et al., 2003; Van Doorn, Branje, & Meeus, 2008). A review of the literature and research related to each of three areas of findings is discussed next.

Types of Conflict Resolution Strategies Used by Parents and Adolescents

Research into the most effective interventions for resolving parent-adolescent conflict shows that negotiating, compromising and collaborating foster open communication often associated with parents' and adolescents' higher satisfaction with their relationship and a stronger sense of self in adolescents (Diamond & Liddle, 1999; Diamond & Siqueland, 1995; Sillars, Smith, & Koerner, 2010). A number of studies in which communication during disagreement solving sessions was observed provide support of this finding (La Valley & Guerrero, 2010; Melby & Conger, 1999; Sillars et al., 2004). One such study was conducted by Sillars, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2005) where 50 families with at least one adolescent child between 11 and 14 years of age completed a combination of questionnaires and recorded family discussions. The collected data yielded results which indicated that in general, parental understanding of adolescents' self-concept was positively associated with frequent and open communication, high relationship satisfaction and adolescent's strong sense of self. When adolescents' immediate thoughts were considered, a low level of parental understanding was found. Additionally, a weak association between parents' understanding of adolescents' immediate thoughts on one hand and communication, relationship satisfaction and child self-concept on the other was observed. In regard to parent-adolescent conflict,

parental understanding of family conflict was found to be strongly associated with high conformity and low relationship satisfaction. The authors concluded that family members displayed moderate levels of understanding in regard to relationship qualities and self-concept while understanding of immediate thoughts was low. The authors explained that open communication promotes better parental understanding which in turn leads to better relationship quality and stronger self-concept in adolescents. Conversely, suppression of communication and use of parental power leads to lower parental understanding, poor relationship satisfaction and weaker self-concept in adolescents.

The literature on parent-adolescent relationships is, however, equivocal regarding what strategies parents and adolescents use when attempting to resolve parent-adolescent disagreements. Some studies have indicated that disagreements between parents and adolescents are resolved through submission (i.e., giving in) or disengagement (i.e., withdrawal), when reported by adolescents, and compromise, when reported by parents (Laursen & Collins, 1998; Smetana et al., 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). For example, based on the results from their qualitative pilot study of 8 parent-adolescent dyads, Riesch et al. (2003) demonstrated that while parents used setting clear expectations, negotiation, cooling off, authority and feedback to resolve disagreements with their adolescents, adolescents generally avoided engaging in disagreements. When they did, adolescents tended to use heightened emotions, aggression, submission and occasionally a cooling method to resolve the disagreements. Wijsbroek, Hale, Van Doorn, Raaijmakers and Meeus (2010) identified a conflict resolution strategy 'exiting statements' which they described as adolescents' desire to end the conflict without resolving it and found that it was usually employed within the context of troubled parent-adolescent relationships. Cicognani and Zani (2009) sought information from both parents and adolescents regarding what conflict resolution strategies they use. The "When We Disagree" scale (Honess et al., 1997) was completed by 302

families with 13 and 15 years old adolescents and showed that families tend to use compromise more than aggression when attempting to resolve disagreements and that resolution of disagreements usually ends in intimacy rather than frustration. Branje, Van Doorn, Van der Valk and Meeus (2009) demonstrated in their study of parents and adolescents' reports about what type of conflict resolution they use that adolescents tend to form different patterns of conflict resolution styles instead of using a single conflict resolution strategy in isolation. The research identified two broad types of conflict resolution strategies, positive and negative, where each type was further divided into two categories. The positive type was comprised of positive and very positive resolution strategies. The very positive resolution strategies included low levels of engagement, exit and withdrawal and high levels of mutual understanding and constructive reasoning while the positive resolution style is characterised by a high level of problem solving and medium level of engagement, exit and withdrawal. The negative type was comprised of negative conflict resolution strategies that included conflict engagement, exit and compliance and withdrawal. Although the negative resolution type was the least common among the participating adolescents, it was found to be closely related to a high level of parent-adolescent disagreement.

Based on the findings from the reviewed studies it seems that compromise is frequently utilised method of resolving parent-adolescent disagreements. However, the amount of supporting evidence is still limited. Moreover, being a pilot study, the findings from Riesch et al.'s (2003) investigation need to be considered as preliminary and warrant further exploration while Cicognani and Zani's (2009) study findings do not distinguish between what resolution strategies parents use from those used by adolescents. Therefore, further exploration of differential use of conflict resolution strategies by parents and adolescents is warranted. Research in this area suggests that the way parents and adolescents

approach resolution of disagreements rests on several factors including adolescents' age and gender, and parents' gender. These factors are discussed in the next section.

Contemporary research concludes that disagreements between parents and adolescents are more frequent during early adolescence than middle or late adolescence while the disagreements are more intense during middle adolescence than early and late adolescence (De Goede, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; Laursen et al., 1998). There is reason to believe that the way parents and adolescents approach resolution of their disagreements may also differ across various developmental stages of adolescence. The reasoning is based on the knowledge that many changes occur within adolescence including adolescents becoming increasingly skilled at mutual perspective taking, reasoning and problem solving which may affect the way they solve disagreements with their parents (Sandy & Cochran, 2000). Some studies show that more effective ways of resolving parent-adolescent disagreements, such as using compromise and reasoning, are present more among older than younger adolescents (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2000; Sandy & Cochran, 2000). Adoption of different conflict resolution styles by middle adolescents compared to late adolescents was illustrated in a study by Reese-Weber (2000). The author found that late adolescents demonstrated greater use of compromise than middle adolescents when resolving parent-adolescent conflict, while middle adolescents reported higher levels of aggression and attack than late adolescents during conflict resolution. Smetana, Daddis and Chuang (2003) found in their study of 82 middle-class African American families that among six categories of conflict resolution styles (parent concedes, adolescent concedes, punishment, compromise, no resolution and unspecified) giving in to parents was the most frequently used strategy by adolescents across all ages. Although the use of compromise increased with adolescents' age while the use of punishment decreased adolescents used compromise the least amount of time when resolving disagreements with their parents.

A longitudinal investigation conducted by Van Doorn, Branje and Meeus (2011) offers further support for a differential use of conflict resolution strategies by adolescents of different age. The researchers followed 314 families with adolescents, aged 13 to 15 years, and their choices of different conflict resolution strategies over a period of 4 years. Positive problem solving (constructive reasoning, compromise) was classified as a constructive conflict resolution while conflict engagement (verbal abuse, anger, loss of control) and withdrawal (avoidance of communication, distancing) were classified as a destructive conflict resolution. As the study incorporates reports from both parents and adolescents it provides an insight into how parents and adolescents perceive the way they resolve their disagreements. Parents and adolescents' independent reports from the Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (Kurdek, 1994) indicated that both adolescents and parents adopt different styles of conflict resolution from early to middle adolescence. In regard to constructive conflict resolution, adolescents' reported an increase in the use of this conflict resolution style with their mothers but not with their fathers. Parents' reports showed that while mothers' use of positive problem solving did not change across adolescents' age, fathers reported using problem solving with older adolescents increasingly more than with younger adolescents. In relation to the destructive conflict resolution styles, adolescents reported that the use of conflict engagement with their mothers initially increased during early adolescence but then declined during middle adolescence whereas no change was reported by the adolescents in terms of the use of conflict engagement with fathers. However, adolescents reported increased use of withdrawal with both parents only that with mothers the increase was indicated to be short-term. On the other hand, parents' reports on the use of conflict engagement with adolescents indicated a decline from early to middle adolescence. Parental use of withdrawal showed different trajectories between mothers and fathers' reports. According to mothers no change in the use of withdrawal strategy was indicated yet fathers' reports demonstrated a significant

increase from early to middle adolescence. The authors concluded that both adolescents and parents tend to change their styles of conflict resolution as adolescents transit from early to middle adolescence. The authors further suggested that the adolescents' reports about the temporary increase in the use of conflict engagement with mothers and minimal use of conflict engagement indicated by both parents suggest that both adolescents and parents tend to use less volatile methods of conflict resolution as adolescents grow older.

Which conflict resolution strategies adolescents of different ages use was longitudinally investigated in a study conducted by Van Doorn, Branje, VanderValk, De Goede and Meeus (2011). To identify adolescents' conflict resolution strategies the study also included adolescents' use of conflict resolution with their peers. Three types of conflict resolution method, positive problem solving (trying to understand each other's viewpoints and compromising), conflict engagement (using verbal abuse and defending) and withdrawal (avoiding to talk and being distant) were measured with the Kurdek's Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (Kurdek, 1994). Data was collected from 559 early adolescents with a mean age of 13.4 years and middle adolescents with a mean age of 17.7 years at two time intervals, three years apart. In both early to middle adolescence and middle to late adolescence categories it was found that conflict resolution methods adolescents use with their parents affect adolescents' choice of conflict resolution methods they use with their friends. Furthermore, in the early to middle adolescent category a spillover effect was found from adolescent-parent to adolescent-friend relationships for positive problem solving and conflict engagement while a bidirectional effect was found for withdrawal. In the middle to late adolescent category a bidirectional effect was found between adolescent-parent and adolescent-friend relationship for all three types of conflict resolution. Taking into account findings from their study, Van Doorn et al. (2011) suggested that both families and friendships provide an important context for adolescents to learn and practice conflict

resolution skills. Parents continue to play an influential role in shaping adolescents' knowledge and use of conflict resolution strategies across all stages of adolescence and for all three methods of conflict resolution. As such, the strategies adolescents use with their parents are generalised to the interactions adolescents have with their friends. The increasing importance of friendships as adolescents age results in conflict resolution strategies becoming more bidirectional, particularly in respect to problem solving and conflict engagement. This positive effect of interactions with friends may induce adolescents to generalise the same conflict resolution strategies to the relationship with their parents.

Findings from a study by Jensen-Campbell and Graziano (2000) are somewhat less conclusive about different uses of conflict resolution strategies across early, middle and late adolescence. The study found that negotiation, a constructive conflict resolution strategy, increased from younger to older adolescents in mother-daughter relationships. However, the reverse effect was found in mother-son relationships where negotiation was used less among older than younger male adolescents. Lastly, no effect of age on adolescents' use of constructive resolution strategies was found within father-adolescent relationships. Use of less effective conflict resolution strategies was found more among older than younger adolescents in Tucker, McHale, and Crouter (2003) study and findings from Cicognani and Zani (2009) study revealed that managing parent-adolescent disagreements was found to be more difficult during middle than early adolescence. Cicognani and Zani (2009) expanded their exploration of differential use of conflict resolution strategies with the inclusion of parents' and adolescents' descriptions of their affect during the process of resolving disagreements between them. Based on adolescents' reports mothers are perceived as more aggressive than fathers and mothers of older adolescents are perceived as more aggressive than mothers of younger adolescents. Based on fathers' reports, relationships with older daughters seem to be more difficult than relationships with their sons, which seem to

continue to improve as sons grow older. Based on mothers' reports the relationship with their adolescent children seems to worsen as adolescents' transit from early to middle adolescence. Although frustration was not found to increase with age, there was evidence that intimacy declined with age. The conclusion offered by the authors was that disagreements between parents and adolescents are more difficult to manage during middle adolescence than early adolescence. The authors explained that the increase in difficulty is largely due to a decline in intimacy between family members observed to occur from early to middle adolescence. The authors added that managing disagreements is an even more complex matter for older adolescent girls as a result of the strong influence of gender socialisation on girls, more so than on boys. Contrary to this claim Tucker et al.'s (2003) study showed that adolescents with more expressive personality, a trait more associated with girls than boys, were able to successfully resolve disagreements with their parents.

Adolescents' age and gender may not sufficiently explain different use of conflict resolution strategies. The way parents and adolescents think about their disagreements may also have an effect on how they resolve those disagreements (Jutengren & Palmerus, 2007). Riesch et al. (2002) hypothesised that different ways of conceptualising conflict may be a possible obstacle which parents and adolescents struggle to overcome at the time of conflict resolution. They noted that when attempting to resolve conflict, adolescents were inclined to focus on their parents' attitude and blame parents for the conflict. Parents, on the other hand, were found to perceive disagreements as either a reflection of their struggle with how to adequately deal with the conflict or an opportunity to teach their adolescents responsibility.

Adolescents' beliefs about their parents and the way they view, interpret and attach meaning to their parents behaviours based on those beliefs may affect adolescents' view of the reasons behind particular conflict outcomes rather than of the outcome itself (Feeney & Cassidy, 2003; Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000). Regardless of whether adolescents

comply with or disengage from parental expectations, they may be inclined to view a particular conflict outcome either as an act of parental responsiveness or parental coercion. To test this hypothesis Jutengren and Palmerus (2007) established four types of mental representations or beliefs that adolescents may hold about their parents' usual approach to conflict resolution. The four types of mental representations, or schemas, are based on the four types of parenting style derived from Maccoby and Martin's (1983) parenting typology: the authoritative conflict schema (submissiveness to parental expectations viewed as a result of a relationship characterised by warmth, mutual respect and harmony), the authoritarian conflict schema (parents are portrayed as powerful rule enforcers), the indulgent conflict schema (parents are portrayed as avoiding conflict due to considering issues at hand as belonging to adolescents' personal domain) and the neglecting conflict schema (parents permit their children limitless freedom as a result of not wanting to get involved). A sample of 120 adolescents between 13 and 15 years of age provided information about conflict schemas and their psychosocial adjustment. The findings indicated that well-adjusted adolescents viewed their parents as using the authoritative conflict style more than the authoritarian conflict style, while adolescents with low levels of psychosocial adjustment reported high prevalence of the authoritarian and indulgent conflict schemas. The results from the study are consistent with the literature on the benefits of authoritative versus other types of parenting. The authors expand on the positive effects of the authoritative conflict resolution schema and state that adolescents who perceive conflict with their parents in the context of the authoritative conflict schema are more likely to engage in reciprocal communication with their parents and use more assertive ways of arguing their position. The authors argue that even though adolescents give in to their parents within the context of both authoritative and authoritarian conflict schemas, adolescents who perceive conflict within the context of the authoritative conflict schema view their conceding behaviour as an expression

of their free choice. Furthermore, the authoritative conflict schema offers an opportunity for adolescents to be more assertive and increase personal agency during the times of disagreements with parents, which has a positive influence on adolescents' social and cognitive development.

The relationship between conflict resolution styles and adolescents development has also been investigated from the perspective of adolescent developmental outcomes. Adolescent development into a psychologically well-developed individual is argued not only to be influenced by the way parents and adolescents solve their disagreements but also how each party influences the resolution of their disagreements. Berzonsky (1990) identified three types of identity formation styles, information-oriented style, normative style and diffuse-avoidant style. Individuals characterised by information-oriented style are open to seek and actively examine information relevant to identity issues. They are flexible in adapting their goals and values to the new information and often use positive problem strategies to resolve conflict. This type of identity has been positively associated with high level of self-esteem and empathy in adolescents (Adams et al., 2001; Nurmi, Berzonsky, Tammi, & Kinney, 1997). Individuals characterised by normative identity style tend to comply with the expectations held by others, such as their parents and are usually not tolerant to discrepant information as they find it jeopardises their conventional views and goals. These individuals also report high self-esteem and low level of problem behaviours, however when managing conflict their most preferred choice of conflict resolution strategies is avoidance (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Nurmi et al., 1997). Individuals characterised by diffuse-avoidant identity style tend to display heavy reliance on situational factors to make decisions and often postpone making such decisions. When coping with stressful situations they mostly use distancing, wishful thinking and tension reduction. These individuals report experiencing social and behavioural problems and troubled relationships. Missotten, Luyckx, Branje,

Vanhalst and Goossens (2011) investigated the link between Berzonsky's (1990) three styles of adolescent identity development and conflict frequency and conflict resolution in a sample of 796 adolescents (14 to 20 years) and 819 mothers (34 to 61 years). Mothers and adolescents' independently completed questionnaires revealed that adolescents with an information-oriented identity style had fewer conflicts with their mothers and used more positive problem solving strategies to resolve conflict. Adolescents with a diffuse-avoidant oriented identity style experienced more conflicts with their mothers and were inclined to use withdrawal to resolve conflict. Contrary to the authors' expectations, adolescents with a normative-oriented identity style showed no association with conflict frequency and the use of withdrawal. Authors suggested that adolescents with this particular identity style come from both authoritative and authoritarian families characterised by passive, submissive and obedient orientation toward parents. As such, these adolescents may be more likely to willingly adopt parents' values and beliefs and to use compliance as a way of resolving conflict. The authors concluded that identity styles not only signify adolescent individual development but also are associated with the way adolescents resolve interpersonal conflicts. The study highlighted that adolescents' identity formation is an important factor to be taken into account as it allows more vulnerable adolescents to be detected from those with greater resilience for the purpose of teaching them effective conflict resolution strategies.

The strategy that most of the literature on resolving parent-adolescent disagreements recommends is communication, based on the use of negotiation, reasoning and compromise. However, the study findings seem to be inconsistent with regard to the differential use of conflict resolution strategies among adolescents and their parents. As the review of the research and literature in the area of parent-adolescent disagreement in previous chapters has indicated, a number of factors have been shown to influence the strategies families use to resolve their disagreements, ranging from adolescents' age, gender and identity formation

through parents gender to the difference in adolescents and parents perceptions of what their disagreements might be about. Thus, further research is needed for more conclusive conclusions to be drawn. Research on the impact of different conflict resolution strategies on adolescents' psychological adjustment and well-being will be clarified with the discussion of the extant research findings to follow.

Conflict Resolution Strategies and Adolescents' Psychological Adjustment

Effective conflict resolution strategies are important for successful renegotiation of family roles, parent-adolescent relationship quality and adolescents' psychological functioning. Studies have shown that the use of constructive conflict resolution styles is positively related to adolescents' psychological well-being (Van Doorn, Branje, Hox, & Meeus, 2009; Sillar et al., 2004; Smetana et al., 2006). Low levels of depression, anxiety, aggression and risk behaviours and high levels of self-esteem and school performance have been found in adolescents who use effective conflict resolution strategies (Branje, Van Doorn, Vander Valk, & Meeus, 2009; Edwards, Barkley, Laneri, Fletcher, & Metevia, 2001). Relational satisfaction has also been observed in families that use effective ways of resolving parent-adolescent disagreements, with adolescents from these families using effective strategies to resolve disagreements not only with their parents but with their peers and romantic partners (Tucker, Mchale, & Crouter, 2003). Unlike constructive methods of resolving parent-adolescent disagreements, destructive conflict resolution is found to lead to more problem-related behaviours in adolescents and less satisfying parent-adolescent relationships (Caughlin & Malis, 2004; Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi, 2007). In fact, ineffective approaches to problem solving were found to further exacerbate parent-adolescent disagreements and lead to increased instances of internalising and externalising problem behaviours in adolescents (Von Der Lippe & Møller, 2000).

Findings from the Wijsbroek, Hale, Van Doorn, Raaijmakers and Meeus (2010) study of the relationship between ‘exiting statements’ as a type of conflict resolution strategy and internalising and externalising problems in adolescents confirm this proposition. In late adolescent girls, symptoms of generalised anxiety disorder (internalising problems) were strongly related to the use of ‘exiting statements’ whereas in early adolescent boys use of ‘exiting statements’ was strongly correlated with delinquent behaviours (externalising problems). When Tucker, McHale and Crouter (2003), investigated, among several different variables, the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and adolescent psychological well-being in a sample of 185 families, with the first born adolescent child aged 15 years and a second born child being 1 to 3 years younger, they found similar results. Data collected from interviews conducted at the participants’ homes on the measures of adolescents’ conflict resolution and psychological well-being revealed that effective conflict resolution was found to be positively related to adolescents’ self-esteem and negatively associated with depression and risky behaviour. In a similar investigation, Van Doorn, Branje and Meeus (2008) assessed the relationship between conflict resolution in parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent problem behaviours, specifically adolescent delinquency. Conflict resolution styles of both parents and adolescents were evaluated with a particular focus on the difference between the conflict resolution styles of fathers relative to mothers and adolescent delinquent behaviour. Participants were 284 adolescents between 12 and 15 years and their parents, however, the authors focused more on the information collected from adolescents. Adolescents and parents provided information about parent-adolescent conflict, conflict affect, conflict resolution styles and adolescent delinquency. They found that a combination of parent and adolescent conflict resolution styles had a strong association with adolescent delinquency. In adolescent-mother relationships when both adolescents and mothers used conflict engagement, higher levels of adolescent delinquent behaviours were detected while

in adolescent-father relationships, when adolescents used conflict engagement and fathers used withdrawal, higher levels of delinquency were detected. Branje, Van Doorn, VanderValk and Meeus (2009) explored the moderating role conflict resolution styles might have on the relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent psychological adjustment. The authors collected data using a battery of questionnaires administered to 1313 early and middle adolescents whose age ranged between 12 and 17 years and found that when families used positive conflict resolution styles, parent-adolescent disagreements occurred less and were positively related to psychological adjustment in adolescents. Furthermore, when withdrawal was used on its own, adolescents reported a greater prevalence of externalising problems. When withdrawal was used in combination with other negative conflict styles (conflict engagement, exit and compliance) adolescents reported higher instances of internalising problems. On the contrary, when positive conflict resolution styles were reported, low to moderate levels of parent-adolescent conflict were found. Furthermore, positive resolution styles were strongly associated with low levels of adjustment problems.

Effective resolution of parent-adolescents disagreements may be influenced by the context within which the disagreements take place (Adams & Laursen, 2007; Tucker, McHale, & Crouter, 2003). Previous research has indicated that effective resolution of parent-adolescent disagreements is more likely to occur in the context of warm and supportive parent-adolescent relationships (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Consistent to this claim Von Der Lippe and Møller (2000), in their investigation of 39 female adolescents, 16 to 19 years of age, and their parents, found that in families where each individual was acknowledged and respected and where conflicts were not avoided, ego development of female adolescents was found to have reached higher levels than the ego development of female adolescents from families where conflict is poorly tolerated or entirely avoided. Further to the family environment, the way parents and adolescents communicate with each

other during attempts to resolve their disagreements has also been found to relate to adolescents' psychological adjustment (Branje et al., 2009). Externalising and internalising problems in adolescents are found to be associated with conflict engagement accompanied with attacking and aggressive behaviour (Jaffee & D'Zurilla, 2003). In contrast, good psychological adjustment has been found in adolescents who use positive problem solving free of aggression and anger, when resolving disagreements with their parents (Tucker et al., 2003). Beaumont and Wagner (2004) in their study of 94 adolescent-parent dyads, found that parents and adolescents used different conversational styles and that the greater the difference in styles the greater the level of negative affect and perceived parent-adolescent conflict.

Furthermore, the authors found that adolescents used high-involvement conversational style characterised by high instance of overlaps, simultaneous speech and interruptions. Parents, on the other hand used high-considerateness conversational style characterised by fewer incidents of interruptions, simultaneous speech and overlapping. The most significant clash of conversational styles was observed within mother-adolescent dyad, which authors suggested may be contributed to a combination of factors. One possible factor is a difference in mothers and adolescents understanding of adolescents' need to express and justify their opinions. Mothers seem to be more inclined to give advice or listen to adolescents' concerns which may trigger the occurrence of different conversational styles within mother-adolescent communication. With fathers however, adolescents seem to be better aligned in terms of their mutual understanding of adolescents' need to express their opinions. This mutual understanding seems to underline the occurrence of similar conversational styles within father-adolescent communication. Another factor is that adolescents may want to dominate conversations with their mothers, which may lead to greater clash in their communication styles. In addition to the finding that parents and adolescents use different conversational styles, the study also demonstrated that when

adolescents perceived greater difference in the conversational styles used by them and their parents, the rating of parent-adolescent conflict was high. Furthermore, when adolescents perceived the use of negative emotions by their parents, adolescents were more likely to emulate their parents' emotional reactions and behaviours. On the contrary, adolescents' expression of negative emotions was found not to affect parents' predictions of conflict with their adolescents. The authors explained that parents seem to be accepting of their adolescents using different conversational styles. Additionally, parents may also be motivated by the need to model appropriate regulation of emotions for their adolescents and thus utilize low levels of negative affect when attempting to resolve family conflict.

There is a clear link between the use of constructive and destructive ways of resolving parent-adolescent disagreements and adolescents' psychological development. Successful resolution of parent-adolescent disagreements is closely associated with high levels of self-esteem and low level of depression, anxiety and delinquent behaviours in adolescents (Branje et al., 2009). Unsuccessful resolution of parent-adolescent disagreements on the other hand is strongly related to poor psychosocial outcomes in adolescents' overall development (Jaffee & D'Zurilla, 2003).

Summary

Escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high level conflict does not only depend on the nature and quality of parent-adolescent relationships but on the way parents and adolescents resolve their disagreements (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). The existing literature and empirical knowledge about the connection between parent-adolescent disagreements and their methods of resolving those disagreements has drawn conclusions which relate to three main areas of investigation. Within the first area of investigation, which concerns itself with the types of conflict resolution strategies that parents and adolescents use, the conclusion has been drawn that compromise is the most commonly used strategy in

parent-adolescent disagreements (Reisch et al., 2002). However when adolescents' and parents' perspectives of conflict resolution strategies are taken into account, a more nuanced picture emerges. Adolescents report using avoidance, withdrawal and disengagement from disagreements while parents report using compromise and negotiation to resolve disagreements with their adolescent children (Smetana et al., 2006).

The second main area of investigation relates to the factors which influence parents and adolescents' choices about what strategies to use when trying to resolve their disagreements. The research consistently shows that strategies adolescents use to resolve disagreements with parents changes with adolescents' age. However, which specific strategies adolescents of different ages use is less clear. Some researchers argue that positive resolution strategies, such as compromise are more prevalent among older adolescents while others argue that younger adolescents tend to use positive resolution strategies more than older adolescents (Cicognani & Zani, 2009). Differential use of conflict resolution strategies becomes an even more complex matter when adolescents and parents' gender is taken into consideration. Some studies show that adolescent girls use more positive conflict resolution strategies than adolescent boys whereas other studies show the opposite effect (e.g., Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2000). Furthermore, when conflict resolution is explored from the parents' point of view, mothers' reports stand in contrast to the fathers' reports insofar as mothers perceive resolution of disagreements to be more difficult to achieve with both sons and daughters while fathers perceive more difficulty in reaching satisfying conflict resolution with daughters than sons (Cicognani & Zani, 2009). The way conflict resolution strategies are conceptualised and conveyed seem to be related to adolescents and parents' beliefs and perceptions of what the disagreements are about and this factors plays a significant part in the process of conflict resolution (Jutengren & Palmerus, 2007; Missoten et al., 2011). In the main, the research shows that adolescents tend to see their parents as authoritative in their

style of conflict resolution. Additionally, adolescents' identity formation seems to influence the way they think about disagreements with their parents. Adolescents identified as having information-oriented identity, in other words those who actively seek and evaluate information about disagreements with an open mind and willingness to be accommodating, are found to be able to effectively and constructively resolve disagreements with parents. On the contrary, adolescents with diffuse-avoidant identity, who rely on distancing, tension diffusion and wishful thinking, are least able to use positive conflict resolution strategies.

The third main area of investigation in the literature explores how resolution of parent-adolescent disagreements affects adolescents' psychological adjustment and well-being. The findings regarding this aspect of parent-adolescent disagreements consistently indicate strong links between effective resolution of parent-adolescent disagreements and positive psychosocial adjustment in adolescents. A strong correlation has also been demonstrated between ineffective resolution of parent-adolescent disagreements and negative psychosocial adjustment in adolescents (Branje et al., 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2008).

Conclusion

As stated at the start of this paper, there are five broad conclusions which may be drawn about the factors that contribute to escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high conflict and the resulting effects of those disagreements on adolescents' psychological adjustment and well-being. Four of these five conclusions have thus far been explored within the context of the current theoretical knowledge and empirical findings. They include disagreement characteristics, normal developmental features of adolescence, parenting and conflict resolution strategies.

In regard to the frequency and characteristics of parent-adolescent disagreements, contemporary studies agree that disagreements occur more frequently during adolescence compared to childhood and adulthood, and that the disagreements are the most frequent in

early adolescence while the intensity of the disagreements is highest in middle adolescence. Topics that generate the most number of parent-adolescent disagreements include day-to-day issues of independence and autonomy, household chores, school responsibilities and peer and sibling relationships. On the contrary, topics perceived to generate intense but not frequent disagreements include sex, dating, substance issues, and religious and political issues. The consensus among the current research findings is that moderate parent-adolescent disagreements are normal and are necessary for healthy psychosocial development of adolescents (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Smetana et al., 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Although the research and literature assert that too frequent and too intense parent-adolescent disagreements or conflict are deleterious to adolescents' psychosocial development, the findings are inconsistent in relation to whether it is the frequency or the intensity that contributes to the escalation of the disagreements into high parent-adolescent conflict. Consequently, the impact of the disagreement frequency as opposed to the disagreement intensity on adolescents' psychological adjustment is less well understood.

Normal factors related to adolescent development may contribute to the escalation of disagreements into high conflict between parents and adolescents. Among these factors, the most salient are individual characteristics of adolescents and broader environmental contexts. Adolescents' age and gender and their cognitive, emotional and social development have been found to positively correlate with an increase in parent-adolescents disagreements. However, the most significant contribution among the normative developmental factors is found to stem from adolescents need for autonomy and independence and the different perceptions of autonomy which parents and adolescents hold. The research argues that adolescents' need for more autonomy within a particular environment such as presence of inter-parental conflict, marriage break-up and socioeconomic disadvantage may lead to the escalation of disagreements into high conflict between parents and adolescents. Yet there are

studies that point to contradictory findings. These studies show that adolescents from similar environmental contexts are able to do well at home and in school or that at least the disruption of parent-adolescent relationships as a function of environmental factors is temporary (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Smetana et al., 2006).

A reason often cited to explain the presence of this contradiction is parenting. Family environment and the way parents and adolescents interact have been established as the most influential factors that contribute to the escalation of normal disagreements into high level of conflict between parents and adolescents. Authoritative parenting characterised by warm, supportive environment that also incorporates parental monitoring and supervision has been found as the most appropriate environment for adolescents to develop into autonomous independent individuals while maintaining contact with their family. Although a large body of research has been accumulated on the topic of parenting and parent-adolescent disagreements, there are still inconsistencies within the research findings in regard to what determines the escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high conflict with some studies pointing to the way parents and adolescents resolve their disagreements. Furthermore, within the context of conflict resolution, some studies have shown that effectiveness of resolution of parent-adolescent disagreements declines with adolescents' age while others have found that the effectiveness improves, as adolescents grow older.

Based on the inconsistency in and lack of clarity of the current research findings the present investigation aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. How do adolescents and parents experience parent-adolescent conflict characteristics, i.e. conflict presence, onset, frequency, intensity and topics?
2. Are there differences in overall level of well-being in adolescents across low, medium and high levels of parent-adolescent conflict?

3. Are there differences in the types of conflict resolution strategies a) used by adolescents and parents and b) across low, medium and high level of parent-adolescent conflict?

These research questions and the literature related to these questions are explored in the upcoming chapters.

There are a few possible explanations for the inconsistency in the current research findings. One is that most studies rely on the information provided from a single source, whether that is adolescents or parents. The inclusion of multiple informants has been found to increase the consistency and validity of results within a single study (Van Doorn et al., 2008). Further to this point, the reliance on reports by a single source has resulted in very little information being made available about parents' experience of disagreements with their children during adolescence. The inclusion of this type of information may assist with understanding how much parents are affected by the disagreements, which can in turn provide more information about how parental stress may possibly be related to the further escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high levels of parent-adolescent conflict.

Another explanation is that most studies use mothers' reports more so than fathers', yet the studies where father's reports are included report differences in adolescents' experience of disagreements and the way they are resolved with mothers and fathers (Cicognani & Zani, 2009). Moreover, the available study findings are predominantly analysed using quantitative data analysis. Although quantitative data analysis is considered to have more intellectual rigour, it may be restricted in terms of its ability to explore complex domains of human interactions due to testing narrowly defined research questions in a limited context (Cretchley, Gallois, Chenery, & Smith, 2010). Qualitative studies, on the other hand, provide an opportunity for more in depth exploration of complex human interactions.

To provide the answers to the above stated research questions in the context of the identified inconsistencies in the current literature, the present investigation extends research on parent-adolescent disagreements in two ways. Firstly, the present investigation uses multiple informants. Data is collected from both adolescents and their parents and reports from both mothers and fathers are included too. The use of multiple informants provides more valid information relevant to all three research questions in the present investigation.

Secondly, the present investigation is designed primarily as a qualitative exploration in order to generate a more detailed account of what specific factors lead to escalated levels of parent-adolescent conflict.

The current investigation is conducted as a sequence of two related, yet separate studies. The first study is a retrospective investigation of young adults' experience of parent-adolescent conflict during their own adolescence. In selecting this infrequently used method of investigation, it is acknowledged that retrospections are subject to a great deal of bias and distortion. Feeney and Cassidy, for example, showed in their 2003 study that retrospective reports of conflict change over time so as to congruently represent current perceptions of relationships. To overcome the bias and distortion often associated with retrospective studies, longitudinal studies are preferred. Longitudinal studies, by their very nature, however, are time-consuming and not practical in time-limited projects such as a PhD project. The inclusion of a retrospective component in this aspect of the current study is an attempt to simply provide a 'flavour' for understanding people's memories of conflicts during their adolescent years and their perceptions of the impacts, if any, of these conflicts have on their current lives. It is anticipated that insights obtained from these two aspects of conflicts may inform questions and interview topics used in study 2.

The second study is a comparative investigation of both parents' and adolescents' experience of parent-adolescent disagreements. Challenges encountered during recruitment of

participants for the two studies are identified and means by which these challenges were overcoming are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Recruitment Challenges

Compared to quantitative research, sample sizes in qualitative research are generally small. The major setback of small sample sizes is generalisability of results, a problem not specific to the present investigation only, but a general issue with less than one third of the published studies reaching the desired sample targets (Ward, Miller, Graffy, & Bower, 2009). Further to the issue of generalisability, small sample sizes pose a threat to the validity of results by increasing the likelihood of Type 2 error or accepting that difference between study groups does not exist when the difference is actually present (Altman & Bland, 1995). Lastly, if targeted sample sizes have not been reached in time studies may need to be extended which can lead to an increase in study related costs (Treweek et al., 2011). Literature on recruitment challenges offers little guidance to researchers in regard to selecting effective strategies for successful recruitment. The evidence for any number of strategies is more anecdotal than empirical because strategies employed in one study may not be applicable to another (Yancey, Ortega, & Kumanyika, 2006). In this chapter challenges experienced in the present investigation are identified and discussed with reference to the current literature on difficulties with reaching sufficient sample sizes. Suggestions for further improvement of recruitment and retention strategies are offered at the conclusion of the chapter.

Research investigating barriers to successful recruitment and retention has identified at least 5 factors that may interfere with participant involvement in research. They include: selection of specific study design (Draper, 2004), use of children and adolescents as participants (Heinrich, Bertram, Kuschel, & Hahlweg, 2005), use of emotive words in study title/materials (Wadden & Didie, 2003), layout and readability of study materials (Frank & Winter, 2004), and treatment of participants including assessment of risk level and intrusion of participant privacy (Penckofer, Byrn, Mumby, & Ferrans, 2011; Yancey et al., 2006).

1. Selection of Specific Study Design

Guidelines for determining what constitutes a sufficient sample size in qualitative research are limited. A possible explanation for the paucity of practical guidelines is that very few studies offer practical suggestions for quantifying sample sizes that are appropriate for qualitative research. For example, a literature search conducted by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) to provide a backdrop to their study revealed only seven studies that provided information on sufficient sample sizes. Of these seven studies, three suggested 30 to 50 participants as an acceptable sample size, one study suggested 20 to 30 participants, one study suggested 5 to 25 participants, one study stated a minimum of 6 participants while the final study suggested that minimum of 15 participants was sufficient as an acceptable sample size. In a recent meta-analysis of 560 PhD studies using a qualitative method of analysis Mason (2010) found that the mean sample size was 31. Most studies in this meta-analysis employed samples that were multiples of ten, thus 10, 20 or 30 participants in each sample. Riesch, Anderson, Pridham, Lutz and Becker (2009) reviewed 17 papers on the topic of nurse researchers' contribution to the area of parent-adolescent relationships and found that the mean number of participants across 5 of the 17 papers that used qualitative analysis was 25, with the sample sizes ranging from 6 to 30 participants.

Many factors that may contribute to the small sample sizes in qualitative research have been identified including study aims, scope of the study, heterogeneity of the population, number of selection criteria, type of data collection methods, researchers' expertise in the field of study, study budget and resources (Charmaz, 2006; Lee, Woo, & MacKenzie, 2002; Moorse, 2000; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). However, the factor that seems to have the most influence on determining adequate sample sizes in qualitative research is a concept of saturation (Mason, 2010). Saturation is a concept whereby

researchers collect data until no new information is discovered, at which point data collection ceases (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003) explored the reasons behind the frequent use of saturation in qualitative research. The authors state that although large enough sample sizes need to be achieved for most or all participants' perceptions, opinions and beliefs to be discovered, more data may not necessarily imply more information. On the contrary, it may lead to repetition of the same data, which eventually may become redundant. They further argue that frequencies of data are not of essential importance to the qualitative research because it is the meaning rather than a generalised hypothesis that is the goal of the qualitative exploration. Lastly, Ritchie et al. point that due to qualitative research being driven by an intensive search for meaning large sample sizes would be onerous, time consuming and expensive.

While saturation plays an important part in estimating the point at which data does not add any new information to the overall story, it still offers limited guidance in quantifying appropriate sample sizes in qualitative studies. Some researchers have attempted to formulate more specific guidelines for qualitative samples sizes. According to Ritchie and her colleagues sample sizes that lie below 50 are considered appropriate, whereas according to Charmaz (2006) 25 is adequate. In general, the smallest number of participants suggested for all qualitative research is 15 (Bertaux, 1981; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

2. Use of Children and Adolescents as Participants

Ethically, for young people to participate in research parental consent must be obtained due to children and adolescents being perceived as vulnerable and unable to make informed decisions about issues that may affect them during the research process. Parental consent is sought to ensure that young people are protected from any adverse effects that may arise from participation in research. The use of children and adolescents may become complex issue when recruiting for qualitative research. Studies of qualitative nature are

designed to collect in-depth information about personal experiences. The challenge with the qualitative design is to truthfully convey personal information to the public while ensuring that participants' identities are not revealed and that participants' rights have not been violated and their experience of participating in research made any worse (Shaw, 2003). Protection of young people under these research conditions is even more necessary.

However, some researchers question to what extent parental involvement is needed for young people to be protected and when it might be appropriate to directly engage young people in recruitment and participation in research. Mayall, Mitchell and Wild (2004) argue that the perception of children and adolescents as vulnerable and immature has led to a culture of "children's voices and children's choices" (p.732) being ignored and neglected in research. Similarly, Moss and Petrie (2002) view children as holistic individuals competent of expressing their own experiences and urge for children's voice to be included in research. Further to this, the authors suggest that children are no longer viewed as research objects but rather as research subjects capable of contributing to knowledge from whom consent needs to be sought too.

In line with a shift in the perception of young people's agency in research new social studies have attempted to engage young people as directly as possible while ascertaining that parental rights and responsibilities were not jeopardised. For example Grossman et al. (1997) and Furr-Holden, Ialongo, Anthony, Petras, and Kellam (2004) found that the recruitment rate ranged between 66% and 97% when children were approached at schools and parents were only required to provide consent for their children to participate in research. When the parental involvement increased the recruitment rate declined.

In their exploration of issues relevant to the use of children and adolescents in research, Munford and Sanders (2004) conducted a four-step recruitment process for their qualitative research in order to successfully recruit young people for their study. The authors

first contacted the organisations from which they wanted to recruit young people. They then informed parents that their children would attend a general presentation session. The next step involved presenting the study to the young people with no adults being present during the session. The final step involved contacting the young people at home and seeking their parents' consent. The authors found this method successful as it gave young people power to feel equal in the process of decision making about possible participation in the study while maintaining parents' rights to be informed and agree to their children involvement.

3. Use of Emotive Words in Study Title and Materials

General use of strong and emotive words in media usually attracts more public attention, however use of emotive words in research seems to have a counterproductive effect on potential participants. Instead of attracting more people to participate in research, studies that have used emotive words in their title were found to have lower recruitment rates (Freedman & Stern, 2004; Mikhailovich & Morrison, 2007). It has been suggested that emotive words are viewed as negative and as such tend to deter people from participating in research. In a qualitative study of overweight people experience of public perception of and attitude to obesity Pollitt (2005) discovered that the word obese had a derogatory connotation for people suffering with excess weight. The use of the word 'obese' elicited adverse reactions and significant levels of discomfort among the participants. The same outcome was found in a similar study by Wadden and Didie (2003) who also explored how overweight people react to the terms obesity and obese. The authors suggested that when the words 'weight', 'overweight' and 'Body Mass Index' were used participants' reactions were judged to be more positive.

In view of the effect of emotive words on participants' reactions Hure, Smith and Collins (2008) made an adjustment to the title of their study after their initial attempt to recruit sufficient number of pregnant women into a nutrition-based study failed. The initial

response rate to study participation was 10% which led the authors to change their approach to the recruitment process. One of the strategies the authors employed to improve recruitment rates was to replace some emotive words they used in the study title with non-emotive words. Initially, their study contained the word ‘obesity’ in its title which was later found to be one of the factors that contributed to small sample size. When the title changed and the word ‘obesity’ removed the percentage of the potential participants increased. Hure et al. concluded that emotive words are perceived to have pejorative tone and that using emotive words may discourage potential participants from taking part in research.

4. Layout and Readability of Study Materials

Manner in which information pertinent to the nature of the research is organised and presented to the public is important as it may influence potential participants’ decision about taking part in research (Hure et al., 2008). Although limited, findings from the research on effectiveness of study material presentation on recruitment rates show that visually appealing materials and materials that use simple and clear language are more successful in generating larger sample sizes than materials presented in standard format with lengthy text (Mapstone, Elbourne, & Roberts, 2007; Paasche-Orlow, Taylor, & Brancati, 2003; Paul, Redman, & Sanson-Fischer, 2003). When Hure et al. (2008) conducted a revision of the strategies that negatively affected recruitment rates in their study of nutrition in pregnant women they found that redesigning their materials improved the recruitment rates. They replaced the black and white pamphlet, which originally contained eight sheets of A4 paper, with the coloured version done in a format of a double sided, single sheet pamphlet with a study logo. The authors also attributed the improved recruitment rate to the enhancement of text simplicity which they achieved using the Flesch Reading Ease Score and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, two Microsoft Word tools used to check how easy text is to read.

The relationship between the length of the information and the recruitment rate was explored in a study by Puffer, Porthouse, Birks, Morton and Torgerson (2004). Two variations of questionnaire designs, single versus double sided paper and single versus multiple booklet layout, were mailed out to 3,836 women randomly recruited for a study of risk factors for osteoporotic fractures. From 1,870 returned questionnaires, the authors found that single booklet questionnaires received better response than the multiple booklet questionnaires. In contrast to the Hure et al.'s (2008) finding that double sided questionnaires lead to better recruitment rates, findings from the Puffer et al.'s study, although not significant at 5% level, showed that single sided questionnaires received better response. In light of their findings the authors suggested the use of single rather than multiple booklets. In regard to double versus single sided layout, double sided layout was chosen as the more cost effective resources even though it was rated second to the single sided layout. The authors' suggestion was based on a small but statistically not significant difference between the two types of resource layouts.

Unlike the Hure et al.'s (2008) and Puffer et al.'s (2004) studies which showed the effectiveness of downsizing study materials from multiple-page pamphlets to a single page document, Brierley, Richardson and Torgerson (2012) caution against the use of short leaflets over full length leaflets. Six hundred patients who took part in the Randomised Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Acceptability of Computerised Therapy were randomly mailed out two versions of the information leaflets. The response rate of participants who received the short leaflets was higher than that of the participants who received long leaflets, however the difference between the obtained response rates was not statistically significant. Furthermore, a greater number of respondents who did not meet the inclusion criteria were found among the participants who received short-length leaflets. The authors concluded that the short-length leaflets have the advantage over the full-length leaflets by being more practical and

attracting greater number of respondents. On the other hand, the quality of the information contained in the short-length leaflets may be compromised. As a way of combining the advantages of both short and full length leaflets the authors suggested more attention to be dedicated to creating leaflets that contain comprehensive but concisely condensed information about the relevant study.

5. Treatment of Participants Including Assessment of Risk Level and Intrusion of Participant Privacy

Another obstacle to achieving targeted sample sizes relate to concerns potential participants may have regarding the way they are treated during research. For example, when Spoth, Redmond, Hockaday and Shin (1996) asked non-participating families about the reasons for refusing to take part in their study of family prevention programs 42% of respondents stated the use of videotape deterred them from participating in the study. These participants stated that the prospect of being videotaped made them feel uncomfortable. The remaining 52% of the respondents stated that time conflicts were a reason for them to decline the invitation to participate. Invasion of privacy was reported to be a deterrent from participating in another study of non-participating families conducted by Heinrichs, Bertram, Kuschel and Hahlweg (2005). The respondents in this survey reported that they declined the invitation to participate in the research due to their perception of having a researcher come to their home as an invasion of their privacy. Hure et al. (2008) also found that perceived demands of taking part in research including taking time off work and costs related to travel, parking and child care may negatively affect participant recruitment. Multistage research, where participation in one stage requires a completion of a previous stage, has been identified as another form of intrusion of participant privacy (Spoth & Redmond, 2000). Attending multiple appointments for all data to be collected has been described as burdensome and time-consuming which often leads to poor retention rate.

To maximise recruitment and retention rate while ensuring protection of public privacy the literature suggests that a balance between research benefits and benefits to the public is established and well-maintained when conducting studies. It is further suggested that minimal disruption to personal time is maintained and minimal emotional demands placed on potential participants by offering different incentives. For example, Hure et al. (2008) offered parking permits to their participants as an incentive for taking part in their study. Some studies used monetary incentives to increase the likelihood of recruiting larger sample sizes (Edwards, Cooper, Roberts, & Frost, 2005; Mapstone, Elbourne, & Roberts, 2007; Tishler & Bartholomae, 2002). However, the effectiveness of using monetary incentives is debatable with only a small number of studies reporting on the use of financial rewards. Offering alternative time appointments and convenient meeting places represents another method of protecting public privacy when recruiting for research (Hure et al., 2008).

In light of the above difficulties associated with the recruitment and retention of participants, the remainder of this chapter describes the steps taken to recruit and retain participants in the two studies undertaken in the present research and compare them to the recommendations made in the literature. Additionally, further recommendations to overcome barriers in recruiting potential participants are offered based on the challenges encountered in the present investigation.

Factors Impacting Recruitment for Study 1 - Young Adults' Experience of Parent-Adolescent Conflict During Their Own Adolescence

The aim of the first study was to retrospectively investigate young adults' experience of parent-adolescent conflict during their own adolescence. The study was designed as a qualitative exploration of their perceptions of the characteristics of their own parent-adolescent conflicts, their perceptions of a difference between disagreements with mothers and disagreements with fathers, their perceptions of conflict resolution strategies and their

perceptions of the effects of their own parent-adolescent conflicts on their current level of well-being. Prior to commencing the study ethics approval was sought from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee. In response to the ethics application the Committee raised some concerns and provided recommendations regarding the level of risk to the participants, content of the materials used and the manner in which consent was to be obtained. Amendments were subsequently made in line with the recommendations and approval for the study was received.

Access to the potential participants was gained in two stages. The first stage involved contacting Heads of twenty-four Schools at the University to seek permission to randomly approach lecturers in the Schools for the purpose of introducing the study to their students. The second stage involved contacting the lecturers and seeking their permission to allow the researcher to introduce the study to their students at the start of a lecture. The researcher contacted 114 lecturing staff and approval was obtained from twenty-eight lecturers.

During the recruitment period 520 students were approached and invited to take part in the study. The researcher personally visited a lecture of the willing lecturers and briefly introduce the students to the purpose of the study, requirements of their participation, and potential study risks and benefits. An information pack consisting of a plain language statement and a consent form was then handed to each student and it was explained that the information packs would be collected in the following week's class from those who had signed the consent form. Each willing participant was then contacted to arrange a time to conduct a structured interview at the university. With participants' written permission, each interview was tape-recorded. A sample of 19 young adults was recruited and retained through this method.

Factors Impacting Recruitment for Study 2 – Parents and Adolescents’ Current Experience of Parent-Adolescent Conflict

The aim of the second study was to investigate adolescents’ and parents’ experience of current conflict. The study was designed as a qualitative exploration of adolescents and parents’ perception of the conflict characteristics, perceptions of a difference between disagreements with mothers and disagreements with fathers, their perceptions of conflict resolution strategies and their perception of the effects of their own parent-adolescent conflict on adolescents’ and parents’ current level of well-being. Prior to commencing the study ethics approval was sought from the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. In response to the ethics application the Committee raised some concerns and provided recommendations regarding the protection of adolescents privacy, content of the materials used and the manner in which the consent was to be obtained. Amendments were subsequently made in line with the recommendations and approval for the study was received.

Families with adolescent children were recruited from a general medical centre and from a family mediation centre. Following written consent to approach patients being obtained from both centres, the study was advertised on each centre’s notice board and reception area. The advertisements invited interested participants to collect from the reception desk a copy of each of two survey kits (one for parents and one for adolescents). The survey kits consisted of a cover letter, a plain language statement with a consent form attached, a three-part questionnaire and a list of referral agencies. Consenting parents and adolescents who signed the consent form also completed the three part self-report questionnaire either at the centres or at their home and returned them to the researcher in the prepaid envelopes. Initially 50 families were proposed to be recruited for the second study. Twenty-one families participated and the sample was comprised of 29 adolescents, 21 mothers and 14 fathers.

The strategies employed in Study 1 and 2 to avoid some of the usual barriers to participant recruitment are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Strategies Used in Study 1 and 2 to Increase Participant Recruitment and Retention Rates

Strategies used to improve recruitment and retention rate	Study 1	Study 2
Suggested number of participants for qualitative study design attained	✓	✓
Direct engagement of adolescents	-	✓
Use of non-emotive words	-	✓
Improved layout and readability of study materials	-	✓
Minimal risk level and intrusion of privacy ensured	✓	✓

Selection of specific study design – suggested number of participants for qualitative study design attained. As previously outlined, literature on sample sizes in qualitative research suggest that no less than 15 respondents are recruited. This guideline was used to recruit meaningful number of participants in both studies of the present investigation. The first study was comprised of 19 young adults while 21 families comprised the sample size in the second study.

Use of children and adolescents as participants - direct engagement of adolescents. Direct engagement of participants in the first study was achieved through recruitment of participants of a consenting age, in this case young adults between 18 and 30 years. The researcher went to the start of the lectures for which permission from relevant lecturers was obtained to introduce the study. Students willing to participate in the research were asked to provide written consent. Following attainment of the written consent the

researcher contacted the willing participants to organise a time and venue for the structured interviews to be conducted. Selection of the time and venue was made in consultation with the willing participants to avoid possible time clashes and ensure their privacy.

In a case of the second study Munford and Sanders (2004) model was used to directly engage adolescents in the recruitment process. A notice was displayed on entrance door and around the reception desk at the two recruitment centres inviting both parents and adolescents to collect survey kits from the boxes placed around reception area. Information letter included in the survey kit advised potential participants that provision of both parent consent and adolescent assent was required for further participation in the study.

Use of emotive words in study title/materials. In the first study of the present investigation a term, ‘conflict’ was used during the introduction of the study to the potential participants and in the materials used for evaluation of the young adults’ experience of parent-adolescent disagreements. It appeared that this term carried a strong emotional connotation, as the final sample size did not exceed 19 individuals. When the word ‘conflict’ was replaced with a non-emotive word ‘disagreement’ in the second study the recruitment rate improved to 21 families or 64 individuals (29 adolescents and 35 parents).

Layout and readability of study materials – improved layout and readability of study materials. In regard to readability and layout of the study materials used in the two studies, the Plain Language Statement and the questionnaire were designed in line with the suggestions made by Hure et al. (2008) and Puffer et al. (2004). The Plain Language Statement was designed as a statement printed on the A4 paper which was double sided and was 3 pages long in total. The questionnaire was designed as a single booklet printed on both sides of the A4 paper. In the first study the materials were printed in black and white with no images included to reflect the nature of the study. To enhance the visual layout, the study materials were presented in a more colourful manner in the second study. Coloured folders

were used to hold all the materials for use by participants in the second study. Images of families were printed on the last page of the booklets and the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Grade Level was performed to ensure text is easy to read. The obtained scores on the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Grade Level for the two studies are reported in the Method section of this investigation. Additionally, participants were encouraged to make follow-up contact with the researcher in case of further clarification needed to decide about study participation.

Treatment of participants including assessment of risk level and intrusion of participant privacy – minimal risk level and intrusion of privacy ensured. In the first study, consenting participants were contacted two weeks after the initial contact was made by the researcher to organise a time and venue for the structured interviews. In the second study centres from which participants were recruited were visited on a regular basis to ensure adequate recruitment procedures were followed by the centre staff. Although, the follow-up contact made some difference in the number of recruited participants, the number of participants did not significantly increase. Treweek, Mitchell, Pitkethly, Cook, Kjeldstrom, Taskila, et al. (2010) conducted a review of randomised and quasi-randomised trials of interventions used to increase the response and retention rate of participants and found that increasing contact between researchers and recruitment sites did not increase the response rate, nor did giving more information to the prospective participants before the commencement of the study. Rather, telephoning participants to remind them about the study, or allowing participants to contact the researcher for any study related queries, did improve participant recruitment as did the inclusion of a small amount of money and not keeping the participants blind to the study's purpose and method. However, Treweek et al (2010) highlighted that, although improvements were achieved by using these strategies, issues of concern were raised in relation to their effect size and ethical evaluation. For example, the effect size of using reminder calls was small. Using monetary incentives did improve

recruitment rate but the sample sizes were still small even after the money was offered. Because of the inconclusive findings about the benefits of monetary inducement and in order to avoid participant compliance under the influence of undue inducement, no financial remuneration was used in the present investigation. This rationale was particularly relative to the sample recruited for the second study. Adolescents are perceived as having limited autonomy and as such, need to be protected from any undue inducement and subtle coercion.

Limitations

Although adequate sample sizes for qualitative studies were achieved in the present investigation limitations to achieve larger sample size were still encountered during the recruitment procedure. Firstly, participants in the first study were university students and a large number of them were from the School of Health Sciences. Students from this school are often approached and invited to participate in various studies either on a voluntary basis or as a course requirement. Hure and colleagues (2008) found that using participants who have already been approached decreases the likelihood of those participants to accept an invitation to participate in another study. Secondly, the timing of recruitment clashed with a many study related commitments of the potential participants as most of the recruitment process took place around the busy times for students (sitting exams and submitting assessments). Additionally, students were not always accessible due study breaks within and between each semester. Similarly, finding time to complete the surveys among their busy schedules may have deterred some families from taking part in the second study. Thirdly, the topic of parent-adolescent conflict may have been perceived as one of a sensitive nature. In regard to the first study, collection of the signed consent forms was conducted within a public setting. This procedure may have been perceived intrusive to the potential participants' privacy. Moreover, it may have carried an element of potential participants being identified as experiencing family disagreements which they may have wanted to avoid. In regard to the second study a

similar explanation can be offered insofar that collection of survey kits from reception areas may have led to a perception of their privacy being intruded in some potential participants.

Based on the challenges experienced during the recruitment for the present investigation following recommendations are offered for future studies: (a) use written information that does not employ emotive words and is more visually appealing; (b) target groups recruited from populations that are not often approached for research participation; (c) ensure that the timing of recruitment is better aligned with the commitments of the targeted population; (d) ensure greater privacy at the time of accepting the invitation to participate; and (e) better outline benefits to participants.

Chapter 6: Effects of Parent-Adolescent Conflict on Young Adults' Psychological Well-Being

The previous chapter highlighted challenges encountered during the recruitment of participants for the two studies in the present investigation. In this chapter literature on the effect of parent-adolescent disagreements on psychological well-being of young adults' is reviewed to support the presentation of the first study "Young adults' experience of parent-adolescent conflict during their own adolescence".

Research into parent-adolescent relations suggests that disagreements between parents and adolescents may continue beyond adolescence, and in some cases may persist for as long as 10 years (Comstock, 1994). Findings from a longitudinal study by Van Wel, Ter Bogt and Raaijmakers (2002) of 1,078 young adults, aged 15 years at the start of the study and 30 years at the end, support the notion that parental bond has a long lasting influence on the psychological well-being of young adults. These researchers found that a positive parental bond had an impact on the young adults' psychological well-being that was equal to that derived from being in a secure romantic relationship or having a best friend. These findings are of particular relevance to the current changes in social demographics of industrialised countries where the age of marriage and parenting is prolonged due to more time being spent obtaining education and reaching occupational goals. Research into the parent-child bond has identified a distinct period, conceptualised as emerging adulthood, during which time young people between the ages of 18 and 25 years continue to explore various possibilities in love, life and career (Arnett, 2000; Galambos, Turner, & Tilton-Weaver, 2005; Shanahan, 2000). Emerging adulthood is described as a subjective experience of accepting responsibility for one's self and making independent decisions. It assumes an extended period of independent role exploration for the purpose of attaining the desired opportunities in love, education and

career, independent of social norms and expectations (Arnett, 2000). As such, the living and financial situations of emerging adults are very diverse and imply that more people rely on their parents during this stage in their life than in previous decades (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005). Consequently, the quality of the relationship between the parents and young adults continues to influence young adults' further course of individuation, socialisation and overall psychological adjustment.

However, the research investigating the extent of the parent-adolescent disagreements in young adulthood is still limited. A possible reason is that parent's influence over their children is considered to significantly decline during young adulthood and consequently, parent-child dynamics remain relatively unexplored beyond adolescence (Bahrassa, 2012).

In light of the changes that accompany adolescents' transition into young adulthood, an interest into how parent-adolescent disagreements change over time has been sparked amongst developmental researchers. As the research into the area of parent-young adult disagreements is still limited, the findings that have emerged recently are mainly related to the characteristics of the disagreements, factors influencing the disagreements, the way disagreements are resolved and how they affect young adults' psychological well-being.

Characteristics of Parent-Adolescent Disagreements

Disagreement characteristics include frequency and intensity of disagreements and topics that most often generate the disagreements and these were explored in a study by Reisch, Jackson, and Chanchong (2003). Thirty-three families with young adult children between ages 22 and 26 were asked to note two incidences of disagreements, one from the past when the young adult was 11 to 14 years-old, and one from the present time, and describe in detail using their own words who or what was responsible for the incident. In addition to the descriptive information, parents and young adults were asked to rate on a 7 point Likert scale how negative each incident was, how often it occurred and how unique

those incidents were to the relationship. The study revealed that young adults and parents disagreed less and their disagreements were rated as less negative during young adulthood compared to the adolescence. Reports about the topics that generate disagreements during young adulthood included life choices, family relationships and connections and responsibility.

In a similar investigation of 273 emerging adults aged 18 to 22 and their perception of disagreements with their parents and their parents' emotional availability and behaviours Renk, Roddenberry, Oliveros, Roberts, Meehan, and Liljequist (2006) found that female adult children and mothers mostly fought about peer issues, independence, material possessions and values while female adult children and fathers fought about independence, peer issues, school issues and values. Male adult children and their mothers fought mostly about independence, school issues, household rules and responsibilities and values and male adult children and fathers fought about school issues, independence, values and material possessions. Young adults' perception of mothers following a disagreement did not change while fathers were perceived as more positive, more accepting and more emotionally available, particularly by female adult children, than their mothers.

Factors Influencing Parent-Young Adult Disagreements

The continuing influence of parents over their adult children has also been documented in a study conducted by McKinney and Renk (2008) in which 151 male adolescents and 324 female adolescents aged between 18 and 22 years participated. The young adults provided information on the following five measures: parenting, family environment, expectations, conflict and adolescents' adjustment. Firstly, the findings revealed that the young adults still view their parents as influential figures in their life, although parents' influence is perceived to be of a lesser degree compared to early and middle adolescence. Secondly, parent-adolescent disagreements were strongly related to

parenting, family environment and adolescent adjustment. For example, higher levels of parent-adolescent disagreement were associated with lower levels of authoritativeness and warmth. In relation to family environment, lower levels of cohesion and adaptability within family environment were found to be associated with higher levels of parent-adolescent disagreement. In relation to adolescent psychological adjustment, higher levels of parent-adolescent disagreement were associated with lower levels of young adults' psychological adjustment, in particular, adolescent self-esteem declined and levels of depression and anxiety escalated. Although the authors acknowledge that the findings of their study are limited due to the use of single-informant reports and the correlational study design, they conclude that the use of multivariable model demonstrated that parenting is perceived to indirectly influence parent-adolescent disagreements by eliciting certain features within family environment which then lead to different levels of parent-adolescent disagreements.

Thus, the research on parent-child disagreements shows a declining rate of the disagreements as children transition from adolescents into young adults parents are still considered influential over young adults' life. Although in decline, parent-young adult disagreements do exist and are mainly attributed to the issue of emerging adults' increasing independence. Young adulthood is a period of individuation from family and thus the same topic of independence found during adolescence to lead to most disagreements between parents and their maturing children re-appears during young adulthood. The literature on parent-young adult disagreements asserts that the disagreements continue to negatively affect psychological adjustment and academic attainment of young adults (Bahrassa, Syed, Su, & Lee, 2011). A recent investigation by Johnson, Giordano, Manning and Longmore (2011) explored the relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and criminal offending in young adulthood. The information on participants' conflict with their parents and level of criminal offending was collected from 1,007 white, black and Hispanic adolescents whose mean age

was 15 years at the time of their first interview and 20 years at the time of their last interview. The combined results from two waves of interviews indicated that parental support, monitoring and parent-young adult disagreements influence criminal offending beyond adolescent years. Findings from the first wave of interviews showed that parent-adolescent conflict was positively and significantly associated with criminal offending in young adulthood while findings from the last wave showed that peer delinquency had a mediating effect on parent-adolescent conflict through offending behaviours. The authors found that poor quality of relationship with parents can lead to adolescents seeking the company of delinquent peers which in turn, may create adverse reactions in parents and reinforce presence of parent-adolescent disagreements. The findings from this study are very informative as they show what possible mechanisms might be responsible for the negative effects of parent-adolescent conflict on externalising problems later in young adulthood.

Interaction between parenting styles and adolescent behaviour was explored in Aquilino and Supple's (2001) longitudinal study of 1,066 adolescents who were aged 12 to 18 years at time 1 and 18 to 22 years at time 2. Depressive symptoms, irritability/hostility, self-esteem, personal efficacy, life satisfaction and risk taking behaviour comprised outcome measures for the adolescents. The results of the study showed that the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship has long-term implications for the psychological development of young adults. Furthermore, the finding that most consistently appeared across all measured outcomes was that coercive parenting, characterised by high levels of parent-adolescent disagreements, was associated with low school performance, substance use, smoking and low scores on measures of personal efficacy, self-esteem and life satisfaction. Moreover, coercive parenting during adolescence was found to continue to influence psychological adjustments of the participants 5 years later.

In contrast to the young adults from families in which the parents used coercive parenting strategies young adults whose parents set clear limits within the context of a warm and open relationship, are found to have a strong sense of self-worth and self-efficacy and exhibit few internalising and externalising problems (Jones, Forehand & Beach, 2000; Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Madsen, & Barry, 2008; Van Wel, Linssen, & Abma, 2000). In their longitudinal study of 1,325 young adults aged between 16 to 25 years, Liem, Cavell and Lustig (2010) explored the influence of authoritative parenting style on young adults' self-worth, self-efficacy and depressive symptoms. The results showed that when the participants were interviewed during their late adolescence they reported high levels of self-worth and self-efficacy and low levels of depressive symptoms and when interviewed as young adults, these characteristics remained unchanged. Although modest effect sizes were yielded by the results of Liem et al.'s study, the authors suggested that the authoritative parenting style during adolescence positively influences the development of self-worthiness and self-efficacy and serves as a protective factor against the development of depressive symptoms in young adults. As such, it was shown that the benefits of authoritative parenting extend into young adulthood.

Resolution of Parent-Young Adult Disagreements

Literature on resolution of disagreements in late adolescents is somewhat perplexing in regard to how the disagreements are resolved with some studies pointing to more mature and positive methods of conflict resolution being prevalent among older adolescents. Yet there are studies that show the opposite effect of older adolescents using less effective conflict resolution strategies. Reisch, Jackson, and Chanchong (2003) recruited 33 families with young adult children between ages 22 and 26 to explore how parents and young adults communicate and handle conflict by focusing on what past and present communication approaches young adults and their parents use to resolve their disagreements. The authors

were also interested in getting suggestions from the participants about the ways their conflict resolution strategies could have been improved. Consensus among parents and young adults was reached in relation to the ways of resolving conflict. Both parties reported being reactive, negative, confrontational and avoidant while occasionally using reflective thinking, planning ahead and caring. Although the conflict resolution methods used by parents and young adults were more direct and healthy compared to those reported to have been used in adolescence, some manipulation and negative and intimidating tactics were still present. Regarding the participants' suggestions on how their communication may have been improved, the young adults stated that they wanted their fathers to be more emotionally and physically available and to be more assertive with their mothers while maintaining their mothers' respect. Parents reported that they wished they had spent more time with their children and got to know their lifestyle and their friends better. They also added that they wished they learned strategies to improve communication which they believe would have ultimately benefited their relationships. The authors concluded that the results of their study point to the young adults' continuing process of individuation and a desire to be treated as adults while their parents retain ongoing interest in frequent communication and interaction with their young adults. Additionally, the authors noted that the use of manipulation, negativity and intimidation when maintained later in young adulthood leads to failed communication, low self-esteem and lack of approachability.

The importance of effective resolution of disagreements is particularly relevant to the establishment of effective communication patterns in adolescents. A child's way of thinking about conflict governs their interpretation of conflicts. These mental representations of conflict and how to process conflict information help growing children form a basic knowledge about their social world and ways of attaining their aims within their social world. Dumlao and Botta (2000) study of two hundred and eleven 18 to 22 years old communication

students investigated interaction between family communication styles and types of conflict resolution styles. Data on family communication patterns and conflict resolution styles yielded support for the authors' prediction that different patterns of family communication influence how the conflict between adolescents and their parents is managed. More specifically, in families where fathers were found to promote collaborative communication young adults were more likely to use collaboration when resolving conflict. In families where fathers' communication was characterised by accommodating patterns young adults were more likely to conform or give in to their fathers. In this particular family communication environment it was further discovered that young adults' tendency to conform was associated not only to their father's accommodating communication pattern but their propensity to discourage communication. In families where fathers did not promote conformity or conversation young adults reported conflicts that did not accommodate, collaborate or confront while in families with a protective father who encourages conformity at the expense of conversation young adults predominantly either avoided conflict or accommodated. Young adults whose fathers promoted pluralistic and consensual communication patterns were most likely to collaborate rather than avoid or accommodate during conflicts. The young adults from these two types of family environments used conversation to reframe conflict and attain mutual goals. The authors found little evidence for confrontational type of communication based on the young adults' reports of their fathers' communication styles although they note that confrontation is far more frequent in real life than what their study showed.

Furthermore, research into family communication patterns has also highlighted positive association between conversation orientation and competent and flexible communication in adolescents from families high in communication and conversation (Koesten, 2004; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997; Riesch, Jackson, & Chanchong, 2003). The research further suggests that high levels of conversation orientation lead to positive

psychosocial outcomes in adolescents including increased resilience, low levels of intimidation and feeling better equipped to seek social support (Fitzpatrick & Koerner, 2005; Kelly, Keaten, Finch, Duarte, Hoffman, & Michels, 2002). Schrodtt, Ledbetter, and Ohrt (2007) took a step further with their study of 567 young adult children between 18 and 36 from married and divorced families in which they differentiated cognitive aspects of family communication from behavioural aspects to better delineate the relationship between family communication and young adult children's psychological well-being. Parental confirmation and affection, the two behavioural aspects authors focused on in the study, partially mediated the influence of conversation orientation and fully mediated the influence of conformity orientation on young adults' psychological well-being including their self-esteem and perceived stress. Furthermore, parental confirmation was found to fully mediate the influence of both conversation and conformation orientations on young adults psychological well-being. Based on the findings of their study the authors concluded that when all family members are encouraged to openly communicate a variety of topics in warm, affectionate and confirmatory manner, young adults report better psychological well-being overall. In particular, young adults are more likely to have greater self-esteem and perceive themselves as less stressed.

In their cross-cultural study of 304 undergraduate students from The United States and Japan, Shearman and Dumlao (2008) found that across both cultures correlational and multivariate analysis revealed a strong association between high levels of conversation and communication and young adults' preference to use integrating and compromising strategies. An equally strong association was found between high conformity and young adults' preference to use avoiding and obliging strategies. Similarly, young adults from both countries expressed satisfaction when their families practised conversational style of communication while low level of satisfaction was reported when the families used

conforming approach to communication. Conversely, in a more recent and elaborate cross cultural study, Shearman, Dulmao and Kagawa (2011) found that both Japanese and American young adults reported that their parents used distributive strategy when managing conflict. The same strategy was reported by Japanese young adults in terms of what conflict style they use the most. However, American young adults reported avoidance as the most frequent strategy they use to resolve conflict. Another overlap in the results across the two cultures was found in relation to the conflict outcomes. Parents of both American and Japanese young adults had the final say more often than their offspring. Compared to Japanese young adults, who reported neutral or complete absence of conflict related consequences American participants reported more negative and positive implications. The authors' explanation for this difference in the conflict experience across the two cultures is that Japanese young adults manage conflict with parents in a more harmonious and/or avoidant fashion. The authors further argue that interdependence and harmony in Japanese families at all stages of child development may be placed as more important than an isolated instance of major parent-adolescent conflict.

Summary

From the literature and research reviewed in this chapter it is evident that the parent-adolescent relationship continues to have an important and long-lasting impact on the well-being of young adults. Parent-young adult disagreements, although they are less frequent and less intense than during adolescent years, still occur in young adulthood. This is largely attributed to the young adults' emerging sense of greater independence and responsibility. As in adolescence, the environment within which the disagreements take place has a significant role in how these disagreements affect young adults' psychological well-being. The positive and protective effects of parental monitoring, support and firm control, all characteristics of authoritative parenting, are yet again found in young adulthood. Lastly, strategies young

adults use to resolve disagreements with parents seem to be more direct and healthy than the strategies used in adolescence, although they still involve a degree of manipulation, coercion and intimidation. Communication, the preferred style of conflict resolution stated by both young adults and parents appears to have inconsistent application in practice.

Understanding which specific factors may contribute to the escalation of conflict from a low to a high level may have significant implications for the relationship between parents and adolescents and ultimately for the parent-adolescent conflict as a significant component of that relationship. Knowledge about these contributing factors may enable prevention of conflictual situations, intervention when the conflict is occurring or prevention of further escalation of conflicts. Although some data about the nature of parent-young adult disagreements has become available in recent times, the findings that have emerged are limited and inconclusive. The aim of the first of the two studies in the present investigation is to extend the current literature on parent-young adult disagreements and the effects the disagreements have on the psychological well-being of young adults. This retrospective study aims to investigate characteristics of past parent-young adults disagreements including disagreement frequency, intensity and topics. Furthermore, the study explores young adults' perception of the difference between past disagreements with mothers and disagreements with fathers and the way these disagreements were resolved. The study includes young adults' perception of how the disagreements affected them in the past and how they affect them at present. Finally, young adults' recommendations of how the disagreements could have been improved are also explored. Study 1 methodology and the results obtained are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: Study 1 – A Retrospective Study of Young Adults’ Experience of Parent-Adolescent Conflict During Their Own Adolescence

Studies of parent-adolescent relationships have shown that adolescents who experience adverse psychological outcomes associated with high levels of parent-adolescent conflict during adolescence continue to report poor psychological adjustment in young adulthood (Johnson, Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2011; Jones, Forehand, & Beach, 2000; Van Wel, Ter Bogt, & Raaijmakers, 2002). Despite the importance of such a finding, there are only a small number of studies which have further investigated the effects of parent-adolescent conflict on psychological adjustment in young adulthood. The present study aims to contribute to the current knowledge by determining whether poor psychological adjustment associated with high levels of parent-adolescent conflict during adolescence continues into young adulthood. The study was designed to retrospectively investigate how young adults, aged 18 to 30 years, experienced conflict with their parents during their own adolescence and how the perceived conflict may have impacted their overall well-being as young adults. To address their experience of parent-adolescent disagreement, the present study explored the young adults’ reports of the disagreement characteristics (i.e., presence and timing of disagreements, disagreement frequency and intensity and disagreements related topics), perception of the difference between disagreements with mothers and disagreements with fathers, and the conflict resolution strategies used by the young adults’ and their parents. Data obtained from the young adults was used to address the following research questions:

1. How did young adults experience parent-adolescent conflict characteristics, i.e. conflict presence, onset, frequency, intensity and topics during their own adolescence?

2. Are there differences in the types of conflict resolution strategies a) used by young adults and their parents and b) across low, medium and high level of parent-adolescent conflict?
3. Are there differences in overall level of well-being in young adults across low, medium and high levels of parent-adolescent conflict?

All variables in the present study were examined qualitatively, except for disagreement characteristics and young adults' psychological adjustment, which were quantitatively assessed. Qualitative analysis with some quantitative statistics were used to create a more comprehensive picture of parent-adolescent conflict. Utilizing two different methods of analysis in a single study allows for an integration of results obtained from the two methods (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). That is, the results of one method can be used to complement the results of the other method. In this way, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Method

Participants. Five hundred and twenty young adults enrolled in tertiary courses within the School of Science, Engineering and Health, the School of Design and Social Context, or the School of Business at RMIT University in Melbourne were invited to participate in the present study. Initially, 30 young adults accepted the invitation to participate, however, 9 did not respond to the researcher's follow-up contact to arrange an interview appointment and two moved to a different location. The final sample consisted of 8 males and 11 females aged between 18 and 30 years ($M = 21.53$, $SD = 3.37$) and represented the typical composition of the Australian population with regard to ethnicity (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006; ABS). Almost all young adults (89.9%) had siblings and the mean number of children per family was 1.8. In terms of parents' marital status, 73.7% of the participants stated that their parents were married, 15.8% stated their parents were divorced

and 10.5% stated their parents were separated. The majority of parents were highly educated, 52.6% of mothers completed university and 15.8% completed technical education while 63.2% of fathers had university education and 10.5% had technical education. Of both mothers and fathers, 5% completed Year 12 in high school, the same percentage of mothers and fathers completed Year 11, 10.5% of mothers and 15.8% of fathers completed Year 10 and Year 9, and 5% of mothers stated Year 8 as their highest education level. To assess socio-economic representativeness of the sample, young adults' postal area code and their parents' education level were compared to the national average provided by the ABS for Metropolitan Victoria (ABS, 2006). The proportion of disadvantaged participants in the current sample ($M = 946.17$) was found to be higher than the national average ($M = 1022.00$).

Measures. A three-part questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the purposes of the present investigation (see Appendix A, section 2). The first part of the questionnaire consisted of a demographic survey, the second part consisted of two instruments to measure the participants' overall level of well-being, and the third part of the questionnaire assessed participants' experience of parent-adolescent conflict during their own adolescence, perceived parenting style, methods used to resolve conflict and the impact of the conflict on their psychological adjustment. Details of each part of the questionnaire are provided below.

Demographic survey. The first part of the questionnaire, which consisted of eight questions, was included with the purpose of collecting information about the participants' age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, parents' marital status and course being undertaken at the time of the interview. Participants' socio-economic status was assessed with The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, one of four indexes within The Socio-Economic Index for Areas produced by the ABS 2006 Census (ABS, 2006; Giallo, Kienhuis, Treyvaud, & Matthews, 2008). The Index of Relative Socio-Economic

Disadvantage is derived from variables such as low income, low educational attainment and unemployment. The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage for the current sample was calculated based on the participants' residential area code and parents' education level. Low scores on this index indicate relative disadvantage and high scores indicate relative advantage. The mean value of The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage for Metropolitan Victoria is 1022.00.

Well-being. The participants' overall level of well-being was measured by their general sense of satisfaction with life and their psychological symptomatology.

Satisfaction with life. The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985) was used to assess participant's current level of life satisfaction (see Appendix A, section 2). Participants completed the five-item questionnaire by rating each response on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 7 (strong agreement). High scores on the scale reflect high life satisfaction whereas low scores reflect extreme life dissatisfaction. Examples of statements include "In most ways my life is ideal" and "So far I have got the important things I want in life". Internal consistency of the scale has been found to range from .78 (Vassar, 2008) to .87 (Diener et al., 1985) indicating a moderate to high level of validity. Internal validity for the current investigation was calculated to be .74. To ensure easy readability of the materials used in this study The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test was performed. This Microsoft Word tool uses the average sentence length and average number of syllables to calculate readability levels and rates text according to a school grade level. For example, a score of 7 indicates that a child attending Grade 7 should be able to understand presented material. Recommended reading levels for most documents used in research according to the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level are between 7 and 8.

Psychological symptomatology. The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21

(DASS21) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), was used to measure participants' current level of psychological symptomatology (see Appendix A, section 2). The DASS21 consists of three self-report subscales designed to measure the level of depression, anxiety and stress in both clinical and non-clinical populations over the past week. Participants rated their responses to each of the 21 items on a scale from 0 ('did not apply to me') to 3 ('applied to me very much, or most of the time'). Examples of the items on the stress subscale include "I found it hard to wind down" and "I tended to overreact to situations", examples on the anxiety subscale include "I experienced trembling" and "I felt scared without any good reason" and examples on the depression subscale include "I felt that I had nothing to look forward to" and "I felt I wasn't worth much as a person". Low scores on the scale indicate normal psychological functioning and high scores on the scale indicate severe psychological symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress. Clinical cut-off levels are provided for each scale in Table 2.

Table 2

Scores for the Three DASS21 Subscales: Depression, Anxiety and Stress

	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Normal	0-9	0-7	0-14
Mild	10-13	8-9	15-18
Moderate	14-20	10-14	19-25
Severe	21-27	15-19	26-33
Extremely Severe	≥ 28	≥ 20	≥ 37

The internal consistency of the three subscales has been found to be satisfactory with internal consistency coefficients have been found to range from .88 - .96 for Depression, .82 - .89 for Anxiety and .90 - .93 for Stress (Brown, Chorpita, Korotitsch, & Barlow, 1996; Henry

& Crawford, 2005). Inter-scale correlations have been reported to range between .45 and .71 for Depression-Anxiety, .65 - .73 for Anxiety-Stress and .57 - .79 for Depression-Stress (Gloster et al., 2008). Clara, Cox and Enns (2001) reported construct validity values (Cronbach's alpha) of .91 for the Anhedonia and Lack of Interest items subset, .66 for Autonomic Arousal items subset, .85 for Skeletal Musculature and Subjective Experience items subset, .92 for Hopelessness and Devaluation of Life items subset, and .91 for Easily Upset/Agitated and Irritability/Overactive items subset. The internal validity of the three subscales used in the present investigation was .87 for Depression, .86 for Anxiety and .90 for Stress.

Parent-adolescent disagreement. The 13 questions related to participants' experience of conflict with their parents during their adolescent years were designed by the researcher (see Appendix A, section 2). These questions were administered in a structured interview format and sought information about the conflict characteristics (i.e., conflict presence, onset of the conflict, conflict frequency, conflict intensity and topical issues in the conflict), the parent with whom they had more conflicts, how conflict with one parent differed from the conflict with the other parent, if and how having a sibling affected the adolescent's relationship with their parents, if and how the conflicts were resolved and could have been prevented or ameliorated, and how conflicts impacted on the young adults' past and present overall well-being.

Disagreement characteristics.

Presence of parent-adolescent disagreement. Item 11 "In your own experience of adolescence, do you remember having had conflict with your parents?" was used to assess participants' response regarding the presence of parent-adolescent conflict.

Disagreement onset. Item 13 “When can you first remember having conflicts with your parents?” was used to assess participants’ responses regarding the onset of parent-adolescent conflict.

Disagreement frequency. Item 14 “How often did you have conflicts with your parents during adolescence?” was used to assess participants’ responses in relation to the parent-adolescent conflict frequency.

Disagreement intensity. Item 15 “In your experience how severe were the conflicts?” was used to evaluate participants’ perception of the intensity of parent-adolescent conflict. Participants rated their responses from 1 (extremely severe) to 4 (not severe).

Topical issues. The Issues Checklist for Parents and Teenagers (Prinz, Forster, Kent, & O’Leary, 1979) consists of 44 items and was used to evaluate the most common topics over which participants and their parents argued during their adolescence (see Appendix A, section 2). Participants were required to circle either ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ for each of the 44 items. For those issues circled ‘Yes’ participants were asked to rate how “hot” the discussion became (from 1 being “calm” to 5 being “angry”). Low scores on the scale indicate less intense conflict while high scores indicate more intense conflict. Examples of the topics include telephone calls, putting away clothes, table manners, sex, lying, and talking back to parents. Cronbach’s alpha for adolescents has been found to be above .85 and for mothers and fathers, above .89 (Riesch et al., 2000; Viikinsalo, Crawford, Kimbrel, Long, & Dashiff, 2005), indicating strong internal validity.

Perception of difference between disagreement with mothers and disagreement with fathers. Items 16 and 17 were developed to assess participants’ perception of the difference in the conflict with mothers and fathers during adolescence. Item 16 required participants to provide information about the parent with whom they disagreed more during adolescence.

Item 17 required participants to provide information about any differences in the conflict they had with their mother compared to the conflict they had with their father.

Conflict resolution. Items 18, 19 and 24 were designed to collect information about the methods used by participants and their parents to resolve conflict between them. Item 18 required an elaborate description of the methods participants and their parents used to resolve conflict. Item 19 collected information about the effectiveness of the reported conflict resolution methods while Item 24 required information about alternative methods participants could have used to resolve conflict.

Impact of parent-adolescent disagreement. To measure the perceived impact of the reported parent-adolescent conflict on participants past and current psychological adjustment (psychological, social and academic attainment). Items 20 and 21 were designed. Item 20 collected information about the past impact of the reported conflict on participants' psychological adjustment while Item 21 collected information about the present impact of the reported conflict on participants' psychological adjustment.

Siblings. Item 22 assessed whether participants' perceived that their relationship with their siblings had any effect on the conflict they had with their parents during adolescence. If yes, participants were required to respond to Item 23, which collected information about how participants' relationship with their siblings might have affected the quality of the relationship with their parents.

Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee. To participate in this study, participants needed to be aged between 18 and 30 years. Confidentiality of information was assured by keeping the signed consent forms separate from the questionnaires and no incentives were offered to participants.

Recruitment. Participants were recruited from a general student population of students enrolled in tertiary courses at RMIT University in Melbourne. The researcher obtained approval from the Heads of twenty-three Schools at RMIT University to ask the lecturers in their Schools to approach their students to invite them to participate in the study. The researcher contacted 114 lecturing staff via email and asked for permission to approach their students at the start of a lecture or tutorial to invite the students to participate in the study. Approval was subsequently obtained from twenty-eight lecturers. At the start of lectures, a 5 minute presentation about the study was given to students. The presentation contained information about the nature of the study, the study design, the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study, the study's aims and a clear statement about participants' rights to privacy and withdrawal from the study. At the end of the presentation an information pack, containing a plain language statement and a consent form, was distributed to the students (see Appendix A, section 1). The students were invited to take the information pack home and read it in their own time. If willing to accept the invitation to participate in the study, students were instructed to sign the consent forms, provide their name and contact email and return them the following week for collection by the researcher in class. Consenting students were then emailed by the researcher to arrange a time and date to conduct the structured interviews. A fortnightly follow-up email was sent to those participants who failed to respond to the first contact by the researcher.

Structured interviews. Structured interviews were conducted in private areas of the University and took an hour and fifteen minutes to complete. Before commencing each structured interview, participants were asked to complete the first two sections of the three-part questionnaire, which took 20 minutes. Throughout the structured interviews participants were asked to provide detailed answers to the 13 items contained in the third section of the three-part questionnaire. With each participant's consent (see Appendix A, section 1 and 3),

verbatim information was recorded on an audiotape to later enable detailed analysis of their responses.

Results

The present study was designed as a qualitative investigation with some quantitative statistics reported. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and Leximancer software (Version 4) were used to qualitatively analyse participants' responses obtained from the structured interview questions about their experience of parent-adolescent conflict during their own adolescence. Data obtained from the questionnaires measuring participants' demographic variables, their overall well-being (SWLS and DASS21) and the relationship between conflict characteristics and participants' overall well-being were analysed using SPSS statistical software (Edition 17 Multilanguage).

Quantitative statistics.

Parent-adolescent disagreement characteristics. Disagreement presence and onset, disagreement frequency and intensity and topical issues that lead to parent-adolescent disagreements were calculated using SPSS statistical software (Edition 17 Multilingual). Proportions of disagreement presence, onset, frequency and intensity reported by 19 participants are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3

Proportion of Conflict Characteristics in the Sample of 19 Young Adults

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Conflict presence		
Yes	15	78.9
No	4	21.1
Conflict onset		

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Childhood	4	26.7
Early adolescence	2	13.3
Middle adolescence	7	46.7
Late adolescence	2	13.3
Conflict frequency		
Daily	2	13.3
Weekly	5	33.3
Fortnightly	3	20.0
Monthly	2	13.3
Every few months	3	20.0
Conflict intensity		
Extremely intense	4	26.7
Intense	3	20.0
Moderately intense	4	26.7
Not intense	4	26.7

The majority of participants reported having had conflict with their parents during adolescence and for half of the participants, the conflict started in middle adolescence. More than half of the participants reported having experienced either weekly or fortnightly conflict with their parents during adolescence and slightly less than half of the participants reported that the conflict with their parents during adolescence was not intense. Participants' responses to items on The Issues Checklist are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Proportion of Type of Topics and Topic Intensity in the Sample of 19 Young Adults

Topical Issues	Intensity*		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>
Fighting with siblings	11	57.9	3.7
Going places without parents	11	57.9	2.9
Talking back to parents	10	52.6	3.8
Getting up in the morning	10	52.6	2
Time for going to bed	9	52.6	1.8
Cleaning up bedroom	9	52.6	2
Who should be friends	9	52.6	3.1
Helping out around the house	9	52.6	2.8
Bothering teenager	9	52.6	3.2
Doing homework	8	42.1	2.9
Putting away clothes	8	42.1	2
Selecting new clothes	8	42.1	2.8
Lying	8	42.1	3.3
Messing up the house	8	42.1	3.3
Telephone calls	7	36.8	2.3
How money is spent	7	36.8	2.6
Taking care of records	7	36.8	1.7
Drinking	7	36.8	3.1
Getting low grades	7	36.8	3.7
Time to have meals	7	36.8	2.3
Table manners	2	10.5	1

Topical Issues	Intensity*		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>
Sex	2	10.5	3.5
Bothering parents	2	10.5	2
Earning money away from home	2	10.5	3
Drugs	1	5.3	3
Smoking	1	5.3	3

Note. * 1 = not angry, 3 = little angry, 5 = angry.

The most common issues that led to conflict between young adults and their parents were *fighting with siblings* and *going places without parents*. Issues such as *allowance*, *drugs* and *smoking* were the least discussed topics. Issues that generated the most heated conflict were *talking back to parents*, *fighting with siblings*, *getting low grades in school* and *sex*.

Pearson correlation was calculated for the 19 participants to determine the relationship between disagreement frequency and intensity and the participants' level of psychological well-being and results displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Correlation between Conflict Frequency and Intensity and DASS21 and SWLS for 19 Young Adults

Disagreement Characteristic	DASS21	SWLS
Frequency	.12	-.17
Intensity	-.46*	.29

Note. * $p < .05$.

The analysis revealed that the association between disagreement frequency and SWLS was negatively correlated, $r = -.17$ and was not significant at .05 level of significance. The association between disagreement frequency and DASS21 was also found to be statistically

not significant, $r = .12$ at the .05 level of significance. The relationship between disagreement intensity and SWLS was found to be positive but statistically not significant at .05 level of significance. The positive association between these two variables needs to be explained in terms of the scoring system used for disagreement intensity. High scores on intensity scale were used to indicate low intensity of disagreements between parents and adolescents while low scores were used to indicate high intensity of disagreements. Statistically significant relationship was found between disagreement intensity and DASS21. The more intense disagreements got the higher indices of depression, anxiety and stress were reported.

Qualitative analysis. Participants' responses about the perceived parenting, the methods used to resolve conflict with their parents and the impact of the conflict on their psychological, social and academic skills were analysed using grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and Leximancer software (Version 4).

Grounded theory is a qualitative enquiry that induces a theory from everyday experiences to elucidate the dominant process within an area of investigation (Coyne & Cowley, 2006; O'Reilly, Paper, & Marx, 2012). The theory is founded on the premise that human behaviours and interactions influence and are being influenced by the social environment (Coyne & Cowley, 2006). The principal aim of grounded theory is to discover patterns of social interactions, the meaning these interactions convey for people and the way these meanings are communicated (Annells, 2004; Cutcliffe, 2000, 2005). To achieve this, the grounded theory uses words, gestures, clothing and objects from everyday situations and the meanings they imply. Data analysed by the grounded theory may originate from all sources that elicit information about social interactions, such as interviews, observational studies and recorded social interactions or written material and literature (Byrne, 2001).

The core analytic process of grounded theory, which is conducted at four levels, assumes constant and systematic comparison and coding of the various pieces of information

within the collected data (Walker & Myrick, 2006). At the first level, data is investigated line by line, or incident to incident, creating specific constructs or core variables. The constructs typically show some of the following features: occur frequently, link various information, are detailed or explanatory in nature, and allow maximum variation in data resourcing (Byrne, 2001). At the second level, comparison of the emergent constructs is performed resulting in category or cluster formation. At the third level, categories or clusters are grouped together serving as a foundation for theory development. At the fourth level, theory emerges through the process of data reduction. Data relevant to the core topic is retained while all irrelevant information is removed. The four stages of the analytic process are typically conducted simultaneously and are performed with each set of data collected during the study. Data collection is performed until no new information is found, a process known as theoretical saturation (O'Reilly et al., 2012).

Grounded theory studies usually commence with a broad conceptual idea and the use of literature review has been found both contraindicated and practical (Coyne & Cowley, 2006; Cutcliffe, 2000, 2005). For the present study, a review of the literature relevant to young adults' experience of parent-adolescent conflict during their own adolescence was conducted in order to identify any gaps in knowledge. Questions 11 to 24 were asked in a structured interview format and analysed using the grounded theory technique. After the first participant interview, data was coded and analysed and this process was then repeated for each subsequent participant interview.

To guard against rater bias two independent assessors, blind to the study, conducted separate analyses of the transcribed participant interviews. The two independent assessors, one psychology graduate and one social studies graduate, used the grounded theory method of data analysis and produced two independent interpretations of the data.

The young adults' responses reflected their perception of parent-adolescent conflict as a normal part of their adolescent development. The responses indicated a sense that participants regarded conflict with their parents as behaviour that typically occurs during adolescence. Moreover, 70% of participants did not see the conflict as detrimental to their relationship with their parents. These young adults were able to enjoy positive relationships with their parents. This may partly be due to the fact that conflict did not occur with high frequency (weekly to fortnightly conflict was reported), and when the conflict did occur, it was not regarded as intense. For those young adults who reported having had conflict with their parents, the conflict was mainly centred around different expectations of young people and their parents, their increasing desire for independence and issues of trust and communication. Specific themes that emerged in regard to the young adults' experience of parent-adolescent conflict include:

1. Different experiences of conflict with mothers compared to conflict with fathers.

Young adults expressed different reactions to their mothers relative to their fathers during conflictual interactions in adolescence. Participants appeared to have more conflict with their mothers than with their fathers. Conflict with mothers appeared to be more regular and ongoing and was usually related to smaller day-to-day issues. For example, one participant stated, *"With Mum I was arguing over getting a lift, borrowing money and doing household chores. We also had arguments every morning over me getting out of bed"* and another said, *"With Mum it was around keeping the house tidy"*. Mothers were also found to be more involved in the participants' life and engaged in more emotional discussions with them. Participants felt that they were able to talk with their mothers about their life events and experiences and felt more comfortable and relaxed around them. Participants felt less restricted to talk back to them and described their mothers as "nagging", "annoying", "erratic" and "prone to yelling". A couple of participants spoke about their mothers as

disciplinarians who ruled the household with their harsh discipline. One person described their mother this way, *“Yes, Mum was the more dominant one. She always talked about being there to guide us. Parents had expectations of us and they were there to meet them and when we didn’t our parents got disappointed”*.

Conflict with fathers seemed to be less frequent but far more intense and significant to the participants, for example, *“When I had arguments with my dad that was for a good reason”* or *“With Dad between extremely severe and severe, but not as in physically severe or shouting or yelling at us. When Dad got angry, that meant that it was really serious situation and there was no mucking around”*. The conflicts were usually related to differing values of young people and their fathers, such as in the case of one person who expressed their belief about equal rights of her parents; *“The conflict with my father was always about standing up for my mother. My mum would get in a fight with my father over the way he was treating her and I would step in to give Mum the support. I was screaming and yelling at him. I used to throw things at him, it was very aggressive.”* Fathers were found to be more of a disciplinarian with firm boundaries. Fathers were described as intimidating and less likely to elicit talking back behaviour from the participants. For three young adults whose parents were divorced, conflict with their fathers was found to be minimal due to the little time participants spent with their fathers.

2. Different treatment of siblings and the impact of sibling relationships on the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Participants’ responses reflected a sense of differential treatment of siblings by their parents. For some participants, they felt that having siblings was a positive experience as it made their relationship with their parents stronger. This was the case for one person who said, *“I got along well with my brothers. They paved the way for us younger children in the family. No, it didn’t interfere with the relationship with my parents”*. Another person stated, *“My siblings were never the topic of my arguments with*

my parents". For others, having a sibling impacted negatively on the relationship with their parents. Although, the sibling relationship was not the topic of the conflicts between these participants and their parents, different expectations and favouritism were identified as strong features of their relationship.

3. Conflict resolution strategies. Participants identified methods that involved compliance with their parents' directives, listening to their parents and engaging in dialogue with a view to meeting a compromise as the most common way of resolving conflict with their parents. One participant stated, *"Communication, we talk. My father would take me to the beach to talk. Our family policy was "don't go to bed before having resolved the conflict"*", another participant said, *"We also had frequent discussions"*. However, other methods such as punishment, arguing, avoidance of conflict, silence and deception were also reported. Strategy often used to punish adolescents' misbehaviours was grounding as illustrated by this young adult's statement, *"Grounding was our parents' usual method of teaching us important lessons in life. When our actions affected others then my siblings and I had to apologise and ameliorate the situation. Grounding usually meant not allowing us to play games or sports. They would also take some things away"*.

Communication through dialogue and listening, which has been indicated in the literature as the preferred method of conflict resolution, was rated effective and productive. When arguing, avoidance, silence and deception, were used to resolve parent-adolescent conflict, however these strategies were judged to be less effective and the conflict often remained unresolved. One participant commented, *"Not effective at all. Usually I would run out of the house to get some fresh air, or a time-out, and then I would come back when the things got calmer or until we exhausted each other so much so that we weren't able to speak any more. Mum fought with me in front of other people or in public, this was her other strategy"*. In respect to how the participants wished the conflict could have been resolved

differently, a recurring wish was to be listened to by their parents. Most participants seemed to feel that there needed to be more understanding from both sides, less imposing of ideas and better communication between them and their parents. Additional suggestions provided by the participants included more flexibility and patience on parents' part and learning to react better to arguments on their part.

4. Psychological adjustment. During adolescence, the conflict appeared to have had quite an emotional impact on nine participants. These young adults stated that, as adolescents, their self-esteem was negatively affected by the conflict with their parents. They described feeling stressed, withdrawn, anxious and at times depressed in relation to the conflict during adolescence. One stated, *"Conflict with my father affected me badly. If I had taken the DASS21 back then the results would have been completely different to what they are now"* and another said, *"I isolated myself, I didn't trust people...I wasn't able to reach agreements and would easily get worked up"*. Another participant stated, *"Emotionally it made me, I think when reflecting back on it, like, real unstable in terms of identity. I wasn't in a climate that I was certain of who I was, which made me, I suppose, uncertain about my future"*. One participant expressed some uncertainty about the link between the conflict and their psychological well-being during adolescence with the following statement *"Up until a year ago my confidence was low, I felt like I was constantly putting on a show to look more confident. I'm not sure if this was more due to the conflict with my parents or if that was just a developmental stage, but I was very quiet and didn't communicate much, which didn't help my psychological state. I felt withdrawn and needed to keep things to myself"*. For the other 10 participants, the impact of the conflict was more short-term and less emotionally intense. One participant explained, *"Effects were only short-term, I would get upset but only immediately after the argument and never for too long"*. Another commented, *"I was fine, didn't have any problems at school or with my friends. Maybe my parents could have done*

with a bit more discipline because they didn't push me that much into trying new things. They gave me a lot of freedom." As young adults, most participants do not experience long-lasting effects of conflict. They generally feel more stable and settled in their present lives. However, for a few who experienced high intensity conflicts with their parents during adolescence the conflict still remains a source of resentment due to its long-lasting effects on their psychological well-being. These participants stated feelings of nervousness and uneasiness when around other people, they also stated having low self-esteem and tend to live a more isolated way of life. For example, one person stated, *"I went through a transition after high school and I'm better today at opening up to others. But I still tend to isolate myself"* and another one said *"Intellectually I am more mature, emotionally a bit more stable but I still have some confusion about my identity. It still resonated with me heavily"*. The strongest statement came from one person who was diagnosed with depression as an adolescent and with a bipolar disorder as a young adult. This person stated, *"I used to have two personalities, 'the public I' which was outgoing, cold, excellent student, into horse riding, and 'I at home', which was this raging and mad person. My parents never acknowledged that as a problem, they would say "Oh, that's her stressing out about her exams". My friends and many other people seemed a lot more concerned about me than my own parents. Well I got diagnosed with depression as an adolescent and bipolar at the age of 20. But at present I am really well adjusted as I had seen a psychologist and a psychiatrist and had some therapy around all this."*

The grounded theory method of analysis revealed that the conflict that young adults experienced with their mothers was different to the conflict they experienced with their fathers. Mothers were described as engaging and conflict with them was more conciliatory, while fathers were identified as disciplinarians who had an intimidating effect on the participants. Most participants had good relationship with their siblings and that relationship

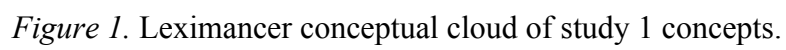
did not affect the quality of their relationship with their parents. Conflict with their parents was resolved equally through submission to parents' directives and compromise, achieved through communication. Arguing, disengaging and using silence and deception were rated as the least productive strategies for resolution of parent-adolescent conflict. When conflict was resolved through arguing, disengagement, silence and deception it had a significant impact on participants' psychological well-being, it left them with internalised feelings of depression and anger. However, the impact mainly had immediate and short-term effects on participants as most live stable and settled lives at present.

Leximancer software (Version 4) is an Australian-developed text analytic software used to perform content analysis of textual data (Smith, 2000). It is an analytical tool that automatically identifies emerging concepts and key themes, which are displayed visually by means of an interactive conceptual map (Cretchley, Rooney, & Gallois, 2010). The software searches for words that frequently appear in the text and groups them together to form concepts. Concepts that are closely positioned to one another within a block of text are considered to have a strong relationship and are grouped to form themes. Each theme is represented as a circle and takes its name after the most salient concept in the group identified as the largest dot in the theme circle. The most important themes are coloured in red and the intensity of the colour decreases with a decline in the theme importance. The concept map is accompanied by a list of concepts ordered according to their importance and a panel for text queries. These features of the concept map provide the user with an option to interact with the map for the purpose of exploring specific concepts and their relationships (Cretchley, Gallois, Chenery, & Smith, 2010; Cretchley et al., 2010).

One advantage of *Leximancer* over other text analytic tools, such as NVIVO (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2012), is that it uses an exploratory approach to qualitative data analysis, which allows the user to detect a wide range of relationships between significant

concepts (Crofts & Bisman, 2010). Another advantage of Leximancer is that it does not require coding of the data and use of rules to attach the codes to data to generate key concepts (Cretchley et al., 2010). The most important characteristic of this software is its reliability (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). The Leximancer method of analysis is grounded in the text, in the way it categorises words into concepts and detects the relationships between those concepts that is consistently performed each time the data is analysed (Cretchley et al., 2010, Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

Leximancer was used in this present study as an additional tool, which provided another level of reliability to the task of qualitative data analysis. The transcribed participant interviews were processed with the Leximancer software and is discussed below according to their level of importance. General terms *coz (because)* and *guess* were removed from the analysis as they did not add meaning to the research questions. The map of concepts Leximancer detected as the most common is displayed in Figure 1 and themes that emerged from the analysis is displayed in Figure 2.



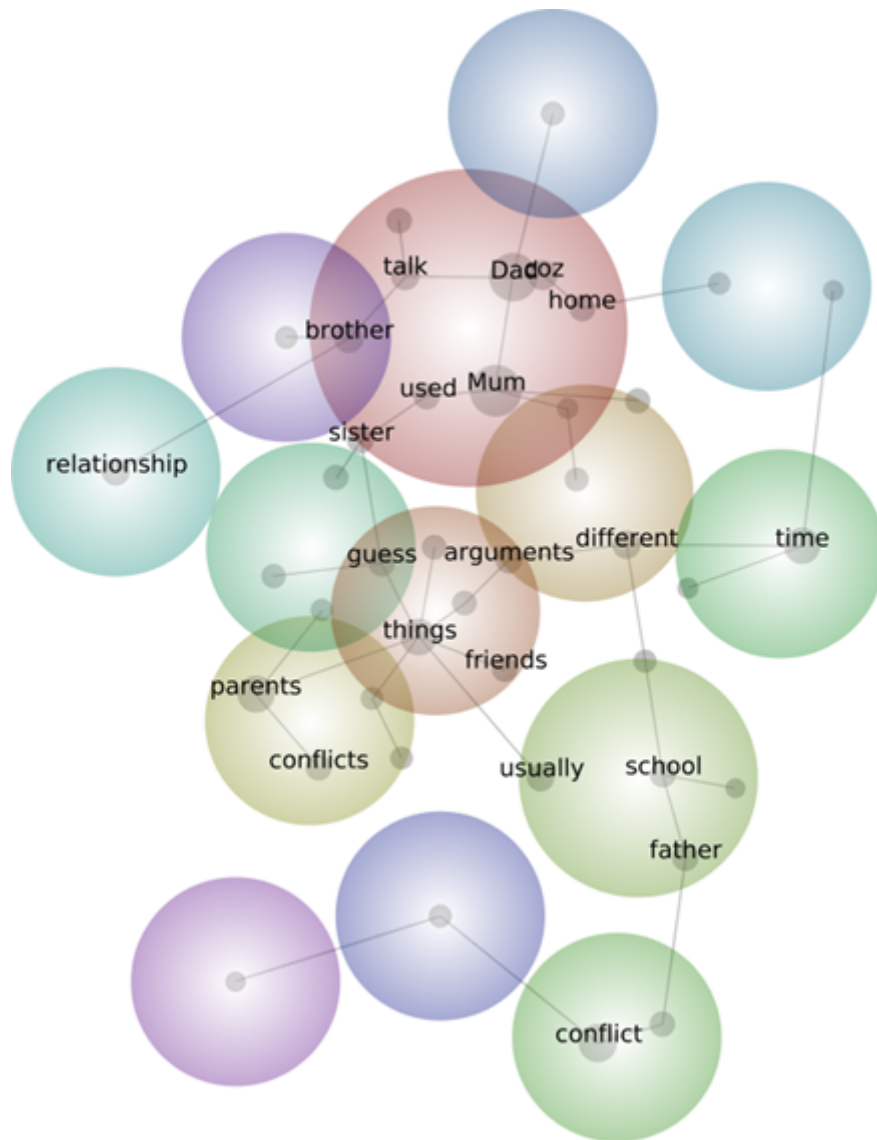


Figure 2. Leximancer conceptual map of study 1 themes.

The most salient theme, found to have 100% relevance to the research question investigated, is “Mum” represented with the largest circle coloured in pale red. The most prominent concept in this theme is *mum*, which is connected to the concepts *dad*, *brother*, *talk*, *sister*, *used*, *home* and *feel*. This theme reflects the study of the following variables: conflicts with both parents, if they had siblings, whether the conflicts with their siblings affected the relationship with their parents and how young adults felt as a result of the conflict with their parents. Mum is the dominant concept due to young adults’ reports about

having more conflict with their mothers than with their fathers, although conflict with both mother and father was present during adolescence. Examples of some of the statements made by the young adults in relation to the concepts of *Mum* and *Dad* are: *"I didn't have any conflicts with my dad. But my mum and I argued a lot and she would make me feel guilty for what I had done."* *"I had more conflicts with my mum because I interacted with her a lot more. I didn't spend much time with my dad, I didn't really talk to him much"*.

For those young adults who reported having siblings a theme that the relationship with their siblings did not affect the relationship with their parents emerged from the analysis performed by Leximancer. Another theme that was derived from the Leximancer analysis of the data was that young adults believed that their parents treated them differently to their brothers and sisters. In support of this finding several statements made by some of the participants are reported here: *"No, conflict with my siblings never created conflict with our parents because they always left it up to us to sort things out. Our parents saw sibling rivalry as a normal part of our development."* *"Yes, there was and still is a differential treatment for my brother and for me. My brother has always been my mum's favourite child."* *"So she would be off my back, with my brother she would be always nagging him. And my dad, I think my dad has favoritism towards me and he finds it hard to feel close to my brother."*

Talking with both parents was identified as another strong concept in this theme. Young adults were more likely to talk to their mothers than their fathers and the content of the discussions with the two parents was found to differ. The conversations with mothers were more frequent and detailed, whereas the conversations with fathers were more to the point. For example, *"Dad is a disciplinarian but not in a conflict type of way, he would talk to us and we would listen to him and obey his instructions. Whereas with Mum, there would be many back and forth conversations before getting anywhere."* *"My mum is sort of like, she*

is more like, she knows how I'm feeling and what I want. Yeah my dad is sort of like if it's not really necessary to talk he doesn't talk."

The concepts *home* and *feel* appeared in relation to those young adults' whose relationship with their parents changed since the marital dissolution. Participants shared similar feelings of uneasiness and split loyalty toward their divorced parents. This theme is illustrated by the following participants' statements: *"I think my environment at home was really, don't know what the word for it. Sort of, like...how do you say trapped but not trapped? Not really engaging and not very engaging with the world...a bit detached". "We used to say that almost as a joke and then they did separate and we were like 'oh' (nervous laughter). No, they try to avoid each other, like if Mum would ring the home phone number and Dad would answer she would hang up."*

The next salient theme, found to have 39% of relevance to the research question is the theme "things", represented with the middle circle coloured in orange. The most prominent concept in this theme is *things* connected to the concept *friends*. This theme was identified in relation to the issues young adults' reported to have argued over with their parents during adolescence. The concept *things* referred to a host of issues that created parent-adolescent conflict but of which most were trivial, day-to-day topics. Relationships with friends were identified as an important part of their life during adolescence. *"When conflict did arise it was usually only in relation to, I guess, simple domestic things and sometimes money."* *"Um, I don't know, it seemed pretty typical of like...seemed pretty similar to those of my friends. My mother's main concern was because I was the eldest child...um was things like watching like, when I was like 12, 13 starting to watch M movies and then fighting about MA movies."* *"Yes. Mum would nag about chores and things, about homework and that. My dad was complacent about those things but he was arguing about the other issue."*

The following theme “different”, rated to have 31% relevance to the research question has the most prominent concept *different* connected to the concept *arguments*. This theme is represented with a circle coloured in pale orange located between the two circles representing the first two important themes. This theme overlaps to a greater degree with the most important theme about the relationship between young adults and their parents and to a smaller degree with the second important theme of issues that generated parent-adolescent conflict. The theme’s concept of *arguments* is situated within the overlapping area indicating that arguments young adults’ experienced with their parents during adolescence differed depending on the parents’ gender. This theme represents an extension of the first theme in that it further explains how the arguments with mothers differed from the arguments with fathers. The way the arguments with mothers were resolved was also different to the way the arguments with fathers were resolved. Mothers and young adults used more conciliatory methods of conflict resolution while conflicts with fathers were resolved through submission. Extracts from the transcribed interviews are reported here to illustrate this theme: *“I had more arguments with my father because he comes from a stricter, conservative background. Mum was more relaxed whereas dad was disappointed when we stopped going to church.”* *“Mum was tough on us especially regarding school. Because she was such a strong influence in my life we had a lot of conflicts. I had less conflict with Dad because I didn’t live with him and conflicts with him always happened because he has a short fuse. So conflicts were not too severe, they were more like bursts of anger that soon declined.”* *“With Dad I suppressed a lot of my own feelings. And ignorance was another way of dealing with him. With Mum we would have dialogues, discussions. We always managed to communicate well.”* *“Like with my mum, it would be with time that the conflict would get resolved. She’d sort of forget about it. But with Dad I would have to earn his respect back and that kind of thing.”*

The theme “Parents”, rated to have 30% relevance to the research question is represented with a dark beige circle. The most prominent concept in this theme is *parents* and is connected to the concept *conflicts*. This theme overlaps with the theme “Things” indicating that young adults had conflicts with their parents over various things during adolescence.

“Parents had expectations of us, they (expectations) were there to meet them and when we didn’t our parents got disappointed. Generally, our parents were supportive of us.” “Most of the time conflict didn’t get resolved at all. Only when my parents would see me doing things that they felt were good for me, only then, the conflict would get dropped.” “We either were able to compromise or we went along with our parents’ instructions.”

The theme “Conflict”, rated to have 21% of relevance to the research question is represented with a circle coloured in pale green. The theme’s most prominent concept *conflict* is its only concept. Conflict with parents started in middle adolescence and was moderately frequent, ranging from weekly to fortnightly. Conflicts were mostly not intense and as such did not have a lasting effect on participants’ psychological, social and emotional aspect of life. A segment from the participant data in relation to each aspect of this theme is presented below:

“When I was about 14 and my parents wouldn’t let me go out with friends.”

“Probably like conflict, as in nagging and arguing, would be three times a week, 3 or 4.”

“Every couple of weeks or once or twice a month.”

“And conflict always happened because he has a short fuse. So conflicts were not too severe, they were more like bursts of anger that soon declined.”

“No, it’s not a heated conflict. It’s usually two people discussing something they don’t agree on.”

Themes that were rated to have relevance less than 20% to the research questions were excluded from the analysis. Such themes appeared on the map as blank circles of blue colours with no concepts included.

Conclusion

Mostly young adults in this study stated that their experiences of parent-adolescent conflict started in middle adolescence but for almost a quarter of young adults the conflict started even before adolescence. The conflict was predominantly in relation to the issues of young people's increased autonomy and independence. Thus, the issues over which young adults argued with their parents were centred around topics of personal jurisdiction such as household duties, personal belongings, and fights with siblings. Qualitative analysis of the information provided by the young adults in this sample revealed that conflict with mothers occurred more frequently but was less intense than conflict with fathers. Conflict with mothers pertained to the issues of everyday relevance while conflict with fathers concerned the issues of greater significance to the young adults. Mothers were perceived as more conciliatory, warmer and easier to talk to about more private matters whereas fathers were perceived as distant and less likely to engage in conversations on an emotional level. For three of the surveyed young adults, their relationship with their mother had the features of the relationship which other young adults had with their fathers. In all cases where parents were described as strict disciplinarians who used control and coercion, young adults reported personal feelings of fear and intimidation from their parents. Young adults were emotionally affected by the conflict with their parents during adolescence. However, the effects were found to be temporary as most young adults currently report living stable lives. However, for a few young people emotionally charged and intense conflicts with their parents during adolescence still seem to affect their current lives. These young people report feeling anxious, withdrawn and isolated. For most young people having siblings was a positive experience

although differential treatment of children in the family was reported by most. Nevertheless, the relationship with siblings had no impact on the quality of relationship between parents and young adults. Conflict resolution strategies used by most young people in this sample included communication and submission, which were rated as effective methods of resolving conflict. Submission was described as effective only in those cases where young adults perceived their parents as not using coercion during their conflicts. Strategies such as avoidance, submission with coercion, silence, arguing and deception were used in smaller number of cases and these strategies were found to be ineffective in resolving conflict.

Young adults reported experiencing low, medium and high conflict which was operationalised based on the results obtained from the participants' responses on the measures of conflict frequency and intensity. Most young adults experienced low to moderate levels of parent-adolescent conflict. These young people reported normal levels of psychological functioning and high level of life satisfaction. Young adults from the low to moderate level of conflict category also reported using communication and submission without coercion most of the time to resolve parent-adolescent conflict. Conversely, young adults who experienced high level of parent-adolescent conflict reported high levels of anxiety and moderate levels of stress and depression. These young adults reported being relatively satisfied with life. Conflict resolution strategies used by the young people in this category of parent-adolescent conflict included submission with coercion and avoidance while communication was not on their list of methods used but was on their list of methods recommended for future use.

Low, Medium and High Levels of Parent-Adolescent Conflict and Conflict Resolution

The four main categories of conflict resolution strategies were identified through the qualitative analysis and include Submission, Communication, Avoidance and Grounding. The analysis of frequency at which the four categories of conflict resolution strategies were used

at each level of parent-adolescent conflict revealed that participants who reported low level of conflict with their parents used Submission and Communication more than Avoidance and Grounding to resolve conflicts. Some of the participants from this group stated that at times a combination of all four conflict resolution strategies was employed to ameliorate the conflict. Communication was described as the most effective method of conflict resolution that aimed at reaching a compromise. Submission, described as non-coercive compliance with parents' expectations, was rated moderately effective. Avoidance and Grounding were strategies perceived to be least productive in resolving conflict with parents.

Participants who reported medium level of parent-adolescent conflict reported an absence of the Grounding conflict resolution strategy. These participants reported that Submission was their most practised way of resolving conflict with their parents followed by Communication and Avoidance. Effectiveness ratings of the reported types of conflict resolution strategies replicate those of the participants who reported low level of parent-adolescent conflict.

Results obtained from the participants who reported high level of conflict resolution show that Submission and Avoidance were the most used ways of conflict resolution. Both types of strategies were described by the participants to entail coercion, aggression and refusal to listen. Low levels of Communication and Grounding strategies was identified for this group of participants. Use of ineffective methods of conflict resolution and the absence of Communication stands in support of the findings obtained from the qualitative analysis that high level of parent-adolescent conflict may be attributed to the lack of appropriate conflict resolution strategies.

The findings from the first study of the present project suggest that young adults who later report that they experienced high levels of conflict with their parents during adolescence also scored high on current measures of psychological symptomatology. The results of this

study support other findings that highlight the importance of reducing conflict during adolescence. Understanding which specific factors determine why some families experience low or moderate levels of parent-adolescent conflict, while others experience high levels of parent-adolescent conflict, would allow for more effective resolutions of the conflict. As the literature review presented in the previous chapter demonstrated, significant inconsistencies in the findings regarding conflict characteristics, parenting and ways of resolving conflict as possible correlates of high levels of parent-adolescent conflict, and as such, the present study was conducted to expand the current literature. The results of the first stage of the current study will be integrated with the second study of the current project in order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the adolescents' experiences of parent-adolescent conflict and how the conflict may impact on adolescents and parents' overall well-being.

Chapter 8: Effects of Parent-Adolescent Conflict on Adolescents' and Parents' Current Levels of Well-Being

Following the findings obtained from the first study, exploration of the same research questions is conducted in the second study of the present investigation “Parents and adolescents’ experience of their current conflict”. The literature and research findings relevant to the effects of parent-adolescent disagreements on adolescents’ psychological well-being and to the effects of parent-adolescent disagreements on parents’ psychological well-being are reviewed in this chapter.

Numerous studies have established a strong association between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent psychological adjustment (Burt, McGue, Krueger, & Iacono, 2003; Formoso et al., 2000). The impact of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescents’ psychological well-being has been closely associated with higher levels of internalising problems such as depression, withdrawal, anxiety, low self-esteem and somatic complaints and externalising problems such as aggression, delinquency or antisocial behaviours and substance use (Branje, van Doorn, van der Valk, & Meeus, 2009; Buehler & Gerard, 2002; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Parent-adolescent conflict is also found to impact parents’ psychological well-being by increasing their negative affect and decreasing their life satisfaction (Smetana et al., 2006). In some instances, parents may feel stressed, confused and out of control of their lives as they find it difficult to deal with the challenges posed by the many transitions that typically occur during adolescence (Sheridan, Peterson, & Rosen, 2010). This may be particularly relevant to those parents faced with their own life transitions such as they enter middle age (Laursen & Hafen, 2009; Smetana et al. 2006).

Effects of Parent-Adolescent Disagreement on Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents

A clear link has been established between parent-adolescent disagreements and undesirable outcomes for the psychological adjustment of adolescents including low self-esteem, symptoms of depression and anxiety and engagement in behaviours that are potentially deleterious to adolescent health, such as substance use and smoking (Crouter et al, 1999; Ennett et al, 2001). Circumstances under which parent-adolescent disagreements and poor adolescent psychosocial adjustment are linked have increasingly been explored in contemporary research. A demand/withdraw pattern of interaction, where one person blames and criticises while the other avoids discussing the issue, represents one set of circumstances, which Caughlin and Malis (2004) examined in their study of 57 parent-adolescent dyads. Parents and adolescents, whose age were respectively between 32 and 61 years and between 13 and 16 year provided information on the measures of their desire for change, overall conflict, demand/withdraw, self-esteem and substance use. The information collected yielded results in support of the association between parent-adolescent disagreements and adolescents' poor psychological adjustment when demand/withdraw pattern of interaction is used. Both parent-demand/adolescent-withdraw and adolescent-demand/parent-withdraw interaction patterns were associated with increased levels of parent-adolescent conflict and poor adolescent adjustment. The authors noted that during adolescence children start spending less time with their parents and more time with their peers which may elicit more demand for monitoring of children of relatively restrictive parents (Fuligni & Eccles, 1993). Less time spent with parents combined with adolescents' need for greater autonomy may lead parents to demand adolescents' greater involvement in family.

Parenting styles have been well documented in the literature as one of the most significant aspects to parent-adolescent disagreements and consequently adolescents' psychological adjustment. Suldo and Huebner (2004) investigated relationship between

adolescents' life satisfaction and familial variables of parent-adolescent conflict and quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. They found that authoritative parenting and in particular, parental support, was positively correlated with high levels of life satisfaction in adolescents of all ages. They also found that life satisfaction mediated the relationship between parental autonomy granting and strictness and adolescents' internalising and externalising problems. Likewise, Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter and Keehn (2007) investigated relationships between maternal and paternal parenting styles and measures of adolescent psychological adjustment (self-esteem, depression and life satisfaction) in a sample of 272 adolescents from grades 9 and 11 and found authoritative parenting to be positively associated with adolescents' higher level of self-esteem and life satisfaction and negatively associated with symptoms of depression. Furthermore, maternal permissive parenting styles, compared to authoritarian and neglectful styles, yielded higher scores on adolescents' self-esteem while paternal authoritative styles, compared to permissive and neglectful styles, yielded lower scores on the measure of adolescents' depression. Adolescents of mothers that use authoritative parenting style scored higher on all measures than adolescents of mothers that use permissive parenting style. With regard to the impact on adolescents of their fathers' use of parenting styles, a significant difference was only found for adolescents' symptoms of depression. The study's findings suggest that fathers may play a different role in the lives of their adolescent children leading to further evidence for the need to examine adolescent psychological adjustment within the context of family and social variables.

In line with the view that parental influence during adolescence is an important predictor of young adults psychological adjustment, Jones, Forehand and Beach (2000) administered a set of questionnaires to 52 adolescents and their parents to examine the association between parenting style in adolescence and educational achievement and

internalising and externalising problems in late adolescence. At the start of their longitudinal investigation the mean age of adolescents was 13 years and at the conclusion it was 19 years and 2 months. The study revealed that maternal acceptance was associated with low levels of young adult internalising problems while maternal firm control was related to secure romantic attachments in early adulthood. No main effect was found for the relationship between paternal authoritative parenting style and young adult psychological adjustment. However, paternal parenting in interaction with maternal parenting was found to be linked to positive outcomes in young adulthood. The authors highlighted the finding that the balance between maternal acceptance and paternal firm control is a strong predictor of positive outcomes for psychological adjustment in young adulthood.

Attempts to explain how parent-adolescent disagreements can harm adolescents' psychological wellbeing have been made in reference to a broader context of family environment. Positive family environment characterised by warm and caring interactions between parents and adolescents was a focus of Yeh, Tsao and Chen's (2009) cultural study of 603 Taiwanese adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age. The study measured how a change in reciprocal filial belief, referred to as children's experience of parental love, care and warmth which children return with affection and gratitude to their parents, and perceived threat can influence parent-adolescent conflict and adolescents' psychological maladjustment. The study demonstrated that reciprocal filial belief lessened during parent-adolescent conflicts which was found to be strongly associated with adolescents' externalising problems of aggression and deviant behaviour. Perceived threat on the other hand, was found to negatively influence adolescents' self-efficacy, in particular adolescents' ability to cope successfully with adverse events in life. The perceived threat had an added effect on adolescents' psychological well-being by elevating their levels of worry, fear, anxiety and depression. Klahr, Rueter, McGue, Iacono and Burt (2011) were interested in the influence of

the shared environment on the association between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent problem behaviour. Their sample consisted of 406 adoptive and 204 non-adoptive families with adolescents aged 11 to 19 years and reports of each family member's behaviour toward other family members, adolescent acting-out behaviour and parent-adolescent conflict, were obtained by trained observers, parents and adolescents. Results indicated that a positive association between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent acting-out behaviour was consistently reported by all informants.

Aside from internalising and externalising aspects of adolescent psychological well-being, adolescents' academic performance has also been identified as another area of adolescent life adversely affected by increased parent-adolescent disagreements. Positive interactions between parents and adolescents have been found to lead to adolescents' higher academic achievement (Amato & Fowler, 2002). Conversely, emotionally distant and negative parent-adolescent interactions have been found to lead to adolescents' poor school grades and school suspension (Crosnoe & Elder, 2004). Dotterer, Hoffman, Crouter and McHale (2008) investigated the bidirectional relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescents' academic achievement in a sample of 168 families with adolescents from 8th to 10th grade with one sibling 1 to 4 years younger. Information about parental education, parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent academic achievement was obtained from parents and adolescents at two time intervals, two years apart. Their results demonstrated a strong association between high parent-adolescent conflict at time 1 and low academic performance at time 2. Although the results showed that adolescent academic performance had implications for parent-adolescent conflict when moderated by parental education, the findings highlighted the importance of considering reciprocal influences that different environments may have on one another. Thus, when adolescents are experiencing difficulties

with school performance this may create stress and tension in the family which can escalate parent-adolescent conflict.

As such, parent-adolescent disagreements may lead to deleterious consequences for adolescents' psychological adjustment in the domains of externalising and internalising problem behaviours. They can also have a negative impact on adolescents' academic performance. More recent research highlights a bidirectional effect of parent-adolescent disagreements on adolescent psychological adjustment with the stress related to the disagreements being the trigger for adolescent problem related behaviours as well as being a subject of further reinforcement.

Effects of Parent-Adolescent Disagreement on Psychological Well-Being of Parents

Literature exploring the effects of the parent-child relationship on the psychological well-being of adolescents suggests that parents too are affected by the quality of the relationship with their adolescent children (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Dekovic, 1999; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Cognitive, emotional and social changes associated with adolescence introduce new behaviours and ideas into the family system and some parents find themselves underprepared to deal with them because the usual forms of support, affection and discipline seem no longer efficient (Sheridan, Peterson, & Rosen, 2010). Research on this issue, although very limited, suggests that the most common concern parents report in regard to adolescence is parent-adolescent disagreements. Relative to parents of younger children, parents of adolescents report high levels of stress, particularly during early adolescence and feel less adequate about their parenting role (Dekovic, Groenendaal, & Gerrits, 1996; Steinberg, 1994). When Silverberg and Steinberg (1987) recruited 129 intact families with a first born child aged between 10 and 15 years to examine whether parent-adolescent disagreements are related to parents' well-being (midlife identity concerns, life satisfaction, self-esteem, tension, nervousness and depression) they found that both mothers'

and fathers' midlife identity concerns escalated as their same sex child gained more autonomy during adolescence. Additionally, a significant decline in the overall well-being was found in mothers but not fathers in relation to the increased intensity of parent-adolescent disagreements. Sheridan, Peterson and Rosen (2010) found that parents who sought family therapy expressed feelings of distress, inadequacy, ill-preparedness and perceived lack of alternatives in relation to escalated levels of parent-adolescent conflict. Dekovic (1999) found in her study of families with adolescent children that higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict were negatively related to parents' psychological well-being. Furthermore, a positive association was found between the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (specifically parents' sense of competence) and parents' psychological well-being. Parents' well-being was also found to be better predicted by the parents' sense of competence and parent-adolescent conflict than parental depression, suggesting that other factors such as midlife issues, quality of marital relationship and job satisfaction may have an additive effect on parents' experience of depression.

Similar findings were obtained in a more comprehensive study by Shearer, Crouter and McHale (2005) who examined which features of parent-adolescent relationship change are most salient for parents. Differences between parents and adolescent perceptions of change and whether changes in parent-adolescent disagreement and acceptance over time are linked to parents' positive and negative views of adolescence were explored in a sample of 170 mothers and 159 fathers at two time intervals 6 years apart. Parents reported changes in adolescents' personal qualities (greater independence, maturity and egocentrism) as more salient to them than changes in their own parenting practices or in the dynamics of the relationship with their adolescent children. Contrary to the authors' expectations and the extant literature, a majority of those parents who reported changes in the dynamics of parent-adolescent relationships stated that they had become closer with their children since the onset

of adolescence. Consistent with the current research was the finding that mother-adolescent relationships involved greater connectedness and involvement than father-adolescent relationships. Mothers rated higher disagreement prevalence than fathers who identified greater change in time spent together. Mothers who identified higher rates of disagreement with their adolescent children also had more negative views about the changes in the parent-adolescent relationship. While mothers' reactions to the changes in their relationship with sons were least positive and their reactions to the decline in disagreement with their daughters were highly positive, no effect was found in the father-adolescent relationship. However, a large proportion of the participants in this study reported no change in relation to acceptance and disagreement and a considerable number of parents indicated improvements in acceptance and disagreement domains of their relationship with adolescents.

Considering the reciprocal nature of parent-adolescent interactions, Knoester (2003) investigated whether the closeness between parents and adolescents is related to psychological distress, life satisfaction and happiness in young adults and whether the changes in psychological well-being of parents may affect the changes in psychological well-being of young adults and vice versa. The participants in the study were 1,077 married couples under 55 years of age, and 691 of their offspring aged 19 years and over, were interviewed five times between 1980 and 1997. Data on the participants' background characteristics, life-course transitions and parent-offspring relationship revealed a significant two-way correlation between parents' and young adults' psychological well-being. In other words, a change in one generation's psychological well-being was found to affect the psychological well-being of the other generation as a function of parent-child connection. In this study, the quality of the relationship between parents and their offspring was assessed by the adolescents' reports. Spring, Rosen and Matheson (2002) examined how parents experience transition to adolescence and what factors, such as midlife issues, might influence

their experiences. The authors used grounded theory to study qualitative data collected from 15 parents with an oldest adolescent child between the ages of 13 and 16 years. The themes which emerging from in-depth interviews about parents' perceptions, responses and re-orientation toward their child's transition to adolescence demonstrated that parents generally found core developmental changes (identity formation, moral and cognitive development and peer influences) challenging. This was particularly evident in the initial stages of adolescence when parents reported feeling uprooted in their parenting. Factors that influenced parents' experience of adolescence included family-of-origin memories, the socio-cultural context and personality traits. Protective buffers included cognitive expectations about adolescence and having a balance between the parenting role and investment in other roles in life. Creating a warm, supportive family environment characterised by empathy and positive beliefs about family members (i.e. attributing adolescent success to their innate traits and negative outcomes to external, transient causes), significantly contributed to parents' ability to perceive many changes associated with the transition to adolescence as normal, despite their reported worries, concerns or confusion. The study showed bidirectional influences of parents and adolescents from the parents' perspective but very few studies have included adolescents' perspective of the same concept.

Findings from the reviewed studies indicate that adolescence is a challenging period for parents as they try to navigate their way around the many changes associated with adolescence. Feelings of stress, inadequacy and, to a certain extent, depression have been reported as possible outcomes of parental effort to renegotiate family roles. Mothers seem to view their parenting skills more negatively than fathers.

Summary

In sum, there is a clear need for more research on the issue of parent-adolescent conflict and the impact it has on the well-being of both adolescents and parents. Further

investigation would enable a better understanding of how normal parent-adolescent disagreements continue at a normal level in some families and escalate into high conflict in others. To address this question the second study in the present investigation was conducted. Families with adolescent children were recruited for this study and their experience of currently existing parent-adolescent disagreements was explored. To maintain consistency between the two studies, the same variables were explored within the context of family and their present disagreements. Thus parents and adolescents' perceptions of disagreement characteristics, difference between disagreements with mothers and disagreements with fathers and conflict resolution strategies were investigated. Next, adolescents and parents overall level of well-being was examined in addition to parents and adolescents' suggestions of how their disagreements could be more successfully resolved. The study 2 methodology and results obtained are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 9: Study 2 – Parents and Adolescents’ Experience of Their Current Disagreements

The second study of the current project was designed to investigate how adolescents aged 12 to 19 years and their parents experience current conflict between them and how the conflict may impact on adolescents and parents’ overall well-being. Particular areas of interest included adolescents and parents’ reports of the conflict characteristics (i.e., presence of conflict, onset of conflict, conflict frequency, conflict intensity and conflict topics), parenting and the methods used by adolescents and parents to resolve conflict.

Data obtained from the parents and adolescents was used to address the following research questions:

1. How do adolescents and parents experience parent-adolescent conflict and what factors (i.e. conflict characteristics, family environment and conflict resolution) might be attributed to escalated levels of conflict?
2. Are there differences in the types of conflict resolution strategies a) used by adolescents and parents and b) across low, medium and high level of parent-adolescent conflict?
3. Are there differences in overall level of well-being in adolescents and parents across low, medium and high levels of parent-adolescent conflict?

As in the case of the first study, all variables in the second study were qualitatively explored, except for demographic characteristics, conflict characteristics and measures of adolescents’ and parents’ overall well-being, which were quantitatively assessed.

Method

Participants. Participants in the second study were 21 family units comprised of 29 adolescents (22 females and 7 males), 21 mothers and 14 fathers. Families were randomly

recruited from two centres that provide assistance to individuals and families experiencing family related problems. These centres were chosen due to the accessibility of their clients. Families with at least one adolescent child aged 12 to 19 years were included in the sample. Adolescents' mean age, which ranged from 12 to 19 years was 15.62 years ($SD = 2.23$), mothers' mean age was 46.57 years ($SD = 7.26$) with their age ranging between 34 and 57, while fathers' mean age 48.50 years ($SD = 5.96$) with their age ranging between 36 and 58. Almost all adolescents (85.6%) had siblings and the mean number of children per family was 2.5. In terms of parents' marital status, 71.4% were married, 23.8% were separated and 4.8% were divorced. All parents had an education level higher than Year 10 (4.8% of mothers and 7.1% of fathers had Year 10 education) and almost equal proportion of mothers (47.6%) and fathers (42.9%) completed university education. Year 11 was completed by 9.5% of mothers and 28.6% of fathers and 21.4% of fathers completed Year 12. Twenty-eight adolescents (96.6%) attended high school while one adolescent had paid employment. A lower percentage of mothers (9.5%) than fathers (28.6%) completed technical education. Of the 35 parents in the current sample only one parent reported household duties for their occupation, the remaining number of parents stated being employed in a professional capacity. Composition of the current sample was compared to the national average for Australia produced by the ABS and was found to be typical with more than 60% of participants identifying themselves as Australian, 23.8% as European and 4.8% as Asian. Families' socioeconomic status (SES) was calculated with The Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, which is based on family's postal area code, unemployment and low education attainment, and compared to the national average ($M = 1020.00$) provided by the ABS for Metropolitan Victoria (ABS, 2006).

Measures. Same measures used in the first study were used in the present study with wording changed in some parts of the questionnaire for adolescents. The three-part

questionnaire used in the second study provided an assessment of participants' demographic data, their overall level of psychological well-being and their experience of parent-adolescent conflict for this study (see Appendix B, section 2 and 3). Demographic information about participants' age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, family structure, education and employment was obtained in the first part of the questionnaire. In the second part of the questionnaire, participants' overall level of psychological well-being, including their satisfaction with life and their level of psychological symptomatology, was assessed. Participants' experience of parent-adolescent conflict, including the conflict characteristics (conflict presence, onset of conflict, conflict frequency, conflict intensity and conflict topics), parenting, the methods used to resolve the conflict and the impact of the conflict on their psychological adjustment, was evaluated in the third part of the questionnaire. To collect individual information from the participants in the present sample, parents and adolescents received separate copies of the questionnaire.

Demographic survey. The first part of the questionnaire, which consisted of nine questions collected information about the participants' age, gender, socio-economic status (i.e., residential area code), ethnicity, parents' highest level of education, parents' marital status, family structure (number of siblings and their age and gender) and parents' occupation. Participants' socio-economic status was assessed with The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, one of the four indexes within The Socio-Economic Index for Areas produced by the ABS 2006 Census (Giallo, Kienhuis, Treyvaud, & Matthews, 2008; Trewin, 2003). The mean value of The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage for Metropolitan Victoria is 1022.

Well-being.

Satisfaction with life. The Satisfaction With Life Scale or SWLS (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin, 1985; Pavot & Diener, 1993) was used to assess participant's current level

of life satisfaction (see Appendix B, section 2 and 3). To ensure SWLS readability for inclusion into the adolescent copy of the questionnaire the scale was evaluated by the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Difficulty Test and deemed to have a reading level of Grade 5 (or equivalent to a reading level of a 10 year-old child). All other psychometric properties of this scale were reported within the Method section of the first study.

Psychological symptomatology. The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 or DASS21 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) was used to measure participants' current level of psychological symptomatology (see Appendix B, section 2 and 3). To ensure DASS21 readability for inclusion into the adolescent version of the questionnaire the scale was evaluated by the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Difficulty Test and deemed to have a reading level of Grade 5 (or equivalent to a reading level of a 10 year-old child). All other psychometric properties of this scale were also reported within the Method section of the first study.

Parent-adolescent disagreement. The copy of the questionnaire distributed to the parents contained 15 questions concerning their experience of parent-adolescent conflict and the copy distributed to the adolescents contained 12 questions in regard to their experience of parent-adolescent conflict. The questions across the two copies of the questionnaire sought self-reported information about conflict characteristics (i.e., conflict presence, onset of conflict, conflict frequency, conflict intensity and topical issues in the conflict), the parent with whom adolescents had more conflicts, how conflict with one parent differed from the conflict with the other parent, if and how the conflicts were resolved and how conflicts could have been prevented or ameliorated and the impact of parent-adolescent conflict on the adolescents and parents psychological adjustment. The three additional questions included in the parents' copy of the questionnaire regarded parents' self-perception in relation to parent-adolescent conflict and parents' perception of if and how the relationship with their adolescent child has changed since the child has become an adolescent. The questions about

the parent-adolescent relationship were included in the parent copy of the questionnaire to examine parents' perception of the changes associated with adolescence. The word 'conflict' used in the parent copy of the questionnaire was replaced with the word 'disagreement' in the adolescent copy to avoid using strong words with adolescent participants. To ensure that adolescents in this sample were able to read and understand information provided in the questionnaires the adolescent copy of the questionnaire was evaluated by the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Difficulty Test and deemed to have a reading level of Year 6. This score indicated that the material used in this study was at a reading age of Year 6 children or children of 12 years of age.

Disagreement characteristics.

Presence of parent-adolescent disagreement. Item 1 "In your own opinion do you experience any conflict with your adolescent child(ren)/parent?" was used to assess participants' response regarding the presence of parent-adolescent conflict.

Disagreement onset. Item 3 "When can you first remember having conflicts with your adolescent child(ren)/parent?" was used to assess participants' responses regarding the onset of parent-adolescent conflict.

Disagreement frequency. Item 4 "How often do you have conflicts with your adolescent child(ren)/parent?" was used to assess participants' responses in relation to the parent-adolescent conflict frequency. Participants were required to rate their response on a scale from 1 (once a week) to 7 (once every few months).

Disagreement intensity. Item 15 "In general how severe are the conflicts are?" was used to assess participants response in relation to the parent-adolescent conflict intensity. Participants rated their responses on a scale ranging from 1 (extremely severe) to 4 (not severe).

Topical issues. The Issues Checklist for Parents and Teenagers (Prinz, Forster, Kent, & O'Leary, 1979; Robin & Foster, 1989) was used to evaluate the most common topics over which participants and their parents argued during adolescence. The 44 item list is designed for use by both adolescents and parents and thus readability level was not performed.

Difference in perception of disagreements with mothers and disagreements with fathers. Items 6, 7 and 8 were developed to assess adolescents and parents' perception of parenting. Item 6 required participants to provide information about the parent with whom the adolescents disagreed more. Item 7 required participants to provide information about any differences in the conflict adolescents had with their mother compared to the conflict they had with their father. Item 8 assessed participants' perception about what might be the most difficult thing about having the conflict.

Conflict resolution. Items 9, 10 and 15 (Item 12 in adolescent copy of the questionnaire) were designed to collect information about the methods used by adolescents and parents to resolve conflict between them and how differently they could have resolved the conflict. Item 9 required a detailed description of the methods participants used to resolve conflict. Item 10 collected information about the effectiveness of the reported conflict resolution methods and Item 15 (Item 12 in the adolescent copy of the questionnaire) required information about alternative methods participants could have used to resolve conflict.

Impact of parent-adolescent disagreement. Item 11 was designed to assess participants' perception of the effects of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescents' psychological adjustment (psychological, social and academic/work attainment). Item 12 in the parent copy of the questionnaire was developed to measure parents' perception of the conflict on their own psychological adjustment. Parents were also asked to state if and how the relationship with their adolescent child had changed since s/he has become an adolescent.

Procedure

Families with adolescent children were randomly recruited from two centres, The Aspendale Family Clinic and The Family Mediation Centre. These two community-based services, providing a range of services to individuals and families, were selected for the easy access to their clients. Written consent was obtained from both centres for the study to be conducted with their willing clients (see Appendix B, section 4). Families were recruited through a notice posted on the door and around the reception area of each of the two locations (see Appendix B, section 5). The notice invited all interested in taking part in the study to take a copy of each of the two survey kits (one for parents and one for adolescents). The survey kits, located at the reception counter, included the following materials in order to assist participants in making a decision about taking part in the research:

1. Cover letter (Appendix B, section 2 and 3);
2. A Plain Language Statement including Consent Form (Appendix B, section 1);
3. A three-part (parent/adolescent) questionnaire (Appendix B, section 2 and 3);
and
4. A list of referral agencies in case participants experience any discomfort while taking part in the research and wish to contact somebody to discuss their concerns.

Participants were also invited to anonymously contact the researcher if they wanted to obtain more information about the current investigation. Parents and adolescents consented to participate in the study by signing the consent forms included in the Plain Language Statement. To protect confidentiality of participant responses, the consent forms were kept separately from the surveys.

Participants completed the three part self-report questionnaire either at the agency premises or at home, which took 30 minutes to complete. In order to ensure that no potential

conflict arose between parents and their adolescent children while doing the surveys, participants were instructed to independently complete the questionnaires and, immediately after the completion, place them in separate non-transparent envelopes provided in the survey kit. The questionnaires were then enclosed together with those of the other family members' and returned to the researcher in the addressed prepaid envelopes.

Results

Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and Leximancer software (Version 4) were used to qualitatively analyse participants' self-reported responses about their experience of parent-adolescent conflict. Participants' demographic data, correlations between conflict variables and participants' level of overall well-being (SWLS and DASS21) were quantitatively analysed using SPSS computer software (Edition 17 Multilanguage).

Quantitative analysis. SPSS statistical software (Edition 17 Multilingual) was used to calculate proportion of conflict characteristics, including conflict presence, conflict onset, conflict frequency, conflict intensity and topical issues that lead to parent-adolescent conflict, for adolescents and parents in the current sample of 21 families. Data about the conflict presence, onset, frequency and intensity are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

Conflict Characteristics as a Percentage of the Sample of Adolescents, Mothers and Fathers

Characteristics	Adolescents	Mother	Father
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Conflict presence			
Yes	27 (93.1)	18 (85.7)	14 (100)
No	2 (6.9)	3 (14.3)	-
Conflict onset			

Characteristics	Adolescents	Mother	Father
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Childhood	1	2	1
Early adolescence	10	12	7
Middle adolescence	3	1	-
Late adolescence	-	-	-
Conflict frequency			
Few times a week	5 (18.5)	7 (33.3)	3 (21.4)
Few times a fortnight	4 (14.8)	4 (19.0)	1 (7.1)
Few times a month	-	2 (9.5)	3 (21.4)
Once a week	7 (25.2)	2 (9.5)	2 (14.3)
Once a fortnight	7 (25.2)	2 (9.5)	2 (14.3)
Once a month	1 (3.7)	-	-
Once every few months	3 (11.1)	4 (19.0)	3 (21.4)
Conflict intensity			
Extremely intense	-	-	-
Intense	4 (14.8)	3 (14.3)	3 (21.4)
Moderately intense	11 (40.7)	4 (19.0)	5 (35.7)
Not intense	12 (44.4)	14 (66.7)	6 (42.9)

Presence of conflict was stated by all three groups of participants and according to 10 adolescents, 12 mothers and 7 fathers the conflict commenced in early adolescence. The frequency of the conflict varied across the participants with the adolescents stating experiencing weekly to fortnightly conflict with their parents most of the time. Relative to mothers, fathers stated experiencing less frequent conflict with their adolescent children

averaging between few times a month to once every few months. For adolescents conflict intensity ratings ranged between not intense (44.4%) to moderately intense (40.7%) while for 66.7% of mothers conflict was not intense. According to fathers not intense conflicts were slightly more prevalent than moderately intense conflicts followed by a quarter of the conflicts being rated as intense.

The Issues Checklist was used to collect information in regard to participants' perception of the most common topical issues about which parents and adolescents disagreed and the intensity of family arguments. *Talking back to parents, helping around the house, cleaning up bedroom, doing homework and fighting with siblings* were rated the most frequently argued topics by the families in this sample. The most frequently argued topics ranked by adolescents included *talking back to parents* (59%, M=3), *helping around the house* (51.9%, M=3), *cleaning up the bedroom* (48.1%, M=2.4), *fighting with siblings* (44.4%, M=3) and *doing homework, putting away clothes and using TV* (40.7%, M=2.5). Adolescents assigned moderate frequency to the following topical issues *how neat clothing looks, getting to school on time and time for going to bed* (37%, M=2.3); *getting up in the morning, bothering parents and going places without parents* (33.3%, M=2); *what teenager eats and telephone calls* (29.6%, M= 2.2); *getting low grades in school and making too much* (25.9%, M=2.4) and *how money is spent, allowance, table manners, who should be friends, getting in trouble in school, bothering teenager and what time to have meals* (22.2%, M=2.3). Less frequent topics of conflict with parents according to adolescents included *cursing, which clothes to wear, messing up the house, lying, playing stereo too loud and turning off lights in the house* (18.5%, M=2.3) with *cleanliness, going on dates, selecting new clothes, coming home on time and how to spend free time* ranked at 14.8% with the mean intensity of 1.8. The least rated topics according to adolescents included *picking books or movies, taking care of things and drinking alcohol* (11.1%, M=2) and *drugs, sex, putting feet on furniture,*

smoking, earning money away from home and buying records, games, things (7.4%, M=2.25).

In mothers' view topics that most frequently generated arguments with their adolescents were *doing homework* (85%, M=2.5), *talking back to parents* (80%, M=2.5), *helping out around the house* (65%, M=3), *time for going to bed and putting away clothes* (60%, M=3). Mothers rated the following group of topics to have generated slightly under half of the arguments with their adolescents *telephone calls, going places without parents, messing up the house, what teenagers eat* (45%, M=2.6) and *making too much noise, lying, getting up in the morning and how to spend free time* (40%, M=2.6). A third of the arguments was generated over the following topics according to mothers *using TV, which clothes to wear, cursing, how money is spent, allowance, turning off lights in the house, getting low grades in school, bothering parents and bothering teenagers* (35%, M=2.3) and issues of *how neat clothing looks, who should be friends and selecting new clothes* (30%, M=2.2). Similarly *cleanliness, drinking alcohol and coming home on time* received the ranking of 25% with the mean intensity of 2.6. Topics that received even lower ranking from mothers included (20%, M=1.9) *table manners, playing stereo too loudly, taking care of things, going on dates, sex, getting to school on time and what time to have meals*. The lowest ranking was assigned to the issues of *buying records and earning money away from home* (15%, M=2.3) and *picking books or movies, drugs, getting in trouble on school, putting feet on furniture and smoking* (10%, M=2.7).

Doing homework was the topic that received the highest ranking among the fathers (64.3%) which they perceived to be moderately intense (M=2.5). *Fighting with siblings and talking back to parents* were also perceived to generate mild (M=2.5) but frequent arguments (57.1%). For fathers issues of *cleaning up bedroom, using TV, cursing, lying and helping out around the house* generated less frequent arguments (35.7%) of mild intensity (M=2.6) while

the issues of *telephone calls, putting away clothes, playing stereo loudly, bothering parents, bothering teenagers* and *how to spend free time* were even less perceived to be the topics of arguments with their adolescents (28.6%, $M=2.4$). Eleven topics which include *time for going to bed, table manners, going places without parents, turning off lights in house, drugs, alcohol, who should be friends, sex, getting to school on time, getting low grades in school* and *hat teenager eats* received similar frequency ranking (21.4%) with mild intensity ($M=2.1$). Similarly, two more groups of issues received a small rating where the first group included issues of *making too much noise, allowance, going on dates, coming home on time, getting in trouble in school, getting up in the morning, messing up the house* and *earning money away from home* (14.2%, $M=2.1$). Issues that constitute the second group were *cleanliness, which clothes to wear, how neat clothes look, how money is spent, picking books or movies, taking care of things, buying records, games, things, putting feet on furniture, what time to have meals* and *smoking* (7.1%, $M=2.1$).

Both adolescents and parents rated the topics that led to most frequent conflict to be moderately intense. Conversely, the topics that represented issues over which parents and adolescents had the least frequent conflict were assigned different intensity levels by adolescents and their parents. Topics that were equally rated by adolescents and their parents as issues over which they had the least frequent and least intense conflict were *picking books or movies, sex* and *earning money away from home*. The topics over which discrepant ratings were obtained from the participants were *putting feet on furniture, smoking* and *drugs*. Adolescents rated the *topic putting feet on furniture* to generate moderately intense conflict while for parents this topic was not one to generate heated arguments. *Smoking* represented a topic that both mothers and fathers perceived to generate moderately intense arguments while for adolescents this topic led to conflict that was not intense. Adolescents and mothers stated

that drugs was the topic that led to moderately intense conflict while the fathers' reports showed that conflicts with their adolescent children over drugs were not intense.

The relationship between the two disagreement characteristics (frequency and intensity) and participants overall level of well-being was examined using Pearson's correlation, displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Correlation between Conflict Frequency and Intensity and DASS21 and SWLS for 21 Families

Characteristic	Adolescents		Mothers		Fathers	
	DASS21	SWLS	DASS21	SWLS	DASS21	SWLS
Frequency	.30	.20	.29	-.45*	.26	.12
Intensity	-.10	.36	-.38	.39	-.42	-.17

Note. * $p < .05$.

Qualitative analysis. Participants' responses about the perceived parenting, the methods used to resolve parent-adolescent conflict and the impact of the conflict on adolescents and parents' psychological, social and academic/work attainment were analysed using grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and Leximancer software (Version 4). The fundamental tenets and procedures of the grounded theory and Leximancer are described in detail under the 'Method' section of Study 1.

Grounded theory was performed to derive themes from the data collected from adolescents and their parents in the current sample of 21 family units. With the exception of two adolescent boys, who stated not having conflicts with their parents, all other adolescents provided insightful descriptions of their experience of the conflict with their parents. Mothers from all 21 family units participated in this study and their reports were found to be elaborate with the information about their experience of parent-adolescent conflict. Although the

number of mothers was higher than the number of fathers in this study, fathers' descriptions were very informative and contained enough information about their overall experience of conflict with their adolescent children.

Specific themes that emerged in regard to the participants' experience of parent-adolescent conflict are as follows:

1. Conflict perceived as normal part of parent-adolescent relationship. The participants expressed a view of parent-adolescent conflict as a normal part of their interactions. Both adolescents and their parents described the conflict as an integral aspect of their daily life that does not have long-term implications for their relationship. One father summarized his view about the conflict in a following statement, *"First I don't see conflict as all bad. Self-image is not created out of conflict. Lots of conflict = lots of communication & lots of confidence"*. A 17-year old adolescent made a similar comment, *"I don't think they (conflicts) can be changed as they are a natural part of human interaction."* The participants' view of parent-adolescent conflict as normal was reflected in their ratings of conflict frequency and conflict intensity on a single item measure. Mostly, the conflict occurred on a weekly to fortnightly basis and most of the time it was not intense. The topics over which adolescents and parents disagreed mainly related to the issues of adolescents' increasing independence and different expectations of adolescents and their parents.

2. Different experience of parent-adolescent conflict. Overall, mother-adolescent conflict was found to be different to father-adolescent conflict based on the reports from the adolescents and both their mothers and fathers. The content of and the emotional environment within which the conflicts occurred were also found to be different between mother-adolescent conflict and father-adolescent conflict. More detailed exploration of the adolescents and parents' perceptions about the stated differences is reported below.

Adolescents' perceptions. Adolescents' perceptions about parent-adolescent conflict revealed that the conflict with their mothers is more frequent and less intense than the conflict with their fathers. Of the 29 adolescents in the current sample, three adolescents stated that they experienced equal amount of conflict with both parents. Early and middle adolescents rated conflicts with their parents as more frequent than late adolescents and similarly male adolescents rated conflicts with their parents as more frequent than female adolescence. Late adolescents regarded conflicts with their parents to be either not intense or moderately intense while early and middle adolescents regarded the conflicts to be moderately intense. Compared to female adolescents who regarded the conflict to be moderately intense, male adolescents perceived the conflicts to range from not intense to moderate intensity.

Adolescents reported that the conflict with their mothers is not intense and is predominantly centred on the issues of participation in household duties, personal hygiene and neatness. For example, one adolescent commented, *"Mum always wants bedroom and bathroom spotless"* and another commented, *"Mother, more household cleanliness orientated"*. Adolescents regard the topical issues over which they argue with their mothers not to be serious and usually assign little importance to these issues, as in the case of this adolescent, *"Arguments with mum are more often about ridiculous things, like water from the shower on the floor"*. When parents are compared on the basis of their general attitude to their children, adolescents perceive their mothers as more tolerant and easy-going than their fathers. One adolescent commented, *"My father is more rough, as for my mother, she is gentel [sic]"*. When compared on the basis of the parents' attitude toward their children during the conflict, adolescents perceive their mothers as more likely to be less calm and to yell and shout than their fathers. To illustrate this finding, the following statements made by two adolescents are quoted, *"Mum is louder"* and *"Nominated parent (mother) is less calm and tends to make a big deal over small things whereas my other parent (father) is much*

more laidback and has more self-control". During the conflict, adolescents often mirror their mothers' behaviour of yelling and shouting and talk back at their mothers. A 12-year old adolescent girl stated, *"My mum, I would just talk back at"*.

In relation to their fathers, adolescents stated experiencing less frequent but more intense and significant conflict with their fathers. Unlike the arguments with mothers, which are about day-to-day life, adolescents perceived arguments with their fathers to be about broader issues in life such as school. To the question about the difference in conflicts with their parents one adolescent said, *"Most with mother (every day things) and father usually school related"* and another stated, *"Father more money orientated arguments, mother more household cleanliness orientated"*. Only one adolescent reported that the conflict with his father is about things that are not important, *"When I fight with Dad, we fight about things that aren't important"*. Fathers were generally perceived as strict disciplinarian and adolescents often felt scared or intimidated by them. One 12-year old adolescent commented, *"Well, for one thing, my dad scares me more, so I mostly do what he says, but with a very bad attitude"*, and another said, *"Argument with my father are more severe than with my step-mother"*. In those families where adolescents reported having more conflicts with their fathers, fathers were perceived as either unapproachable or rigid. Adolescents from these families experienced their fathers as over-powering and dismissive and conflicts with their fathers as one-sided arguments without a possibility to express their views. One adolescent said, *"My father doesn't listen and take in others point of view"*, and another commented, *"Dad doesn't listen to me"*. Unlike these adolescents, adolescents who stated more conflict with their mothers perceived their fathers as calm parents with whom they were able to discuss differing points of view, such as in the case of this adolescent, *"When I have a disagreement with Mother it's yelling. With Father just stating our points."*

Parents' perceptions. Similar to the adolescents, parents also rated mother-adolescent conflict to occur more frequently than father-adolescent conflict. Mothers view conflicts with their adolescent children about practical day-to-day things. They view themselves as actively engaged parent with a pro-active role in their adolescents' life as one mother commented, *"Pro-active parenting role & more aware of events and situations than other parent"*. Compared to fathers, mothers see themselves as the more tolerant parent, for example one mother said, *"I'm more tolerant for longer and if I ask and he doesn't respond, I'll rent and rave, then he will. My partner is quicker to annoyance, louder, more frightening"*. According to mothers, adolescents are more likely to raise their voice and answer back at them during arguments, as in the case of this mother, *"Me, answers back; other parent doesn't spend as much time with – not comfortable so on best behaviour"*. Fathers also view adolescents as having more conflict with their mothers than with them. Fathers describe mother-adolescent conflict as being around household responsibilities and personal hygiene while their domain is to teach their adolescents values in life and establish or maintain boundaries. One father commented, *"Neatness, clothing, personal care, housekeeping are my wife's territory. My topics are school work, eating, chores, tardiness"*, a father to an 18-year old adolescent stated, *"Teaches them they can't do what they want others have boundaries"*.

3. Parent-adolescent conflict perceived to be difficult. Adolescents and parents expressed identical views of conflict between them as a difficult component of their daily interactions. The difficulty most participants reported in relation to parent-adolescent conflict was lack of understanding. For adolescents and their parents not being understood was the hardest part of having the conflict. The lack of understanding was often mentioned in conjunction with the feelings of frustration, anger, emotional tiredness, guilt and fear of loss of trust.

Adolescents' perceptions. For adolescents, not being listened to was another prominent feature that contributed to conflict being difficult. A few adolescents explained their sense of not being listened to with the following statements, "*They don't listen and they make fun of what I'm saying*", "*I get in trouble and they don't listen to my side/point*", and "*The fact they rarely listen in my opinion or they do and get snappy about it.*" In addition to not being listened to, adolescents pointed out lack of understanding as really difficult to deal with when having conflicts with their parents as illustrated by this adolescent, "*They don't understand where I'm coming from*". An 18 year old adolescent girl stated, "*Not being able to see eye to eye*" in regard to the perceived lack of understanding. Another aspect that adolescents found to be difficult in relation to the conflict with their parents was having to deal with the consequences of their behaviours they perceived to be inadequate to the given situation, for example, "*Apologising for a small and completely insignificant matter*". Adolescents also expressed a difficulty with dealing with their emotions of anger, sadness and guilt in relation to the conflict with their parents. Several adolescents stated, "*Feeling bad after*", "*Feeling really upset afterwards*" and "*Getting really upset and not being able to function for a while after - feeling too low/angry to do homework etc.*". Another important difficulty in relation to parent-adolescent conflict reported by the adolescents was the sense of temporary disruption in the relationship with their parents. Some adolescents complained about not being able to access their parents after the conflict as this adolescent remarked, "*When you have a disagreement, it's hard when you need to ask a parent questions*". Some complained about the tension in the house and others stated that there would be less time for meaningful conversations as mentioned by this 14 year-old adolescent girl, "*There is less time for decent conversation*".

Parents' perceptions. Parents, too, perceived lack of mutual understanding as difficult to deal with when having conflict with their adolescent children. One mother wrote,

“Misunderstanding”, another stated, *“Getting them to understand the responsibility involved in sharing/caring in a household – as in a community/workplace”*. Parents also found the emotions of their children as well as their own feelings difficult to manage at the time of the conflicts. A mother of a 15 year-old adolescent boy stated, *“Feeling guilty and seeing him sad”*, and one father wrote, *“When they get sad because I have been unfair”*. Another mother said, *“The anger levels escalating and regretting it later”*, similar comment was made by a mother of two adolescent children, *“More raised voices and their anger towards me”*.

Another two features of the conflict were identified as difficult based on the parents’ reports. The first one was a sense of being challenged by their adolescents. Parents spoke about finding it hard to conclude conflicts due to adolescents either not listening or being resistant. In relation to not listening, one parent stated, *“They don’t want to listen”*, and another wrote, *“When they don’t listen and mumble when they respond”*. In relation to resistance, a mother of a 12 year old adolescent girl said, *“Constant resistance. It’s very draining – whether the resistance is very passive (not doing things) or active (refusing to do things)”*. Fathers more than mothers described the conflicts as being difficult to resolve or bring to a close. One father wrote, *“The most difficult thing is that often there is no resolution”* and another commented, *“Bring it to a close and getting on with the next thing. Too much time wasted, e.g., getting saxophone practice to happen takes longer than sax practice itself”*. Mothers on the other hand expressed greater concern about the possibility of losing their adolescents’ trust and friendship. For example, one mother wrote, *“Feeling like you lose them as a friend”*. The second one was not feeling in control of the situation. Fathers spoke about their impulsivity and quick temper as signs of losing control of the situation and contributing to further escalation of the conflict. A father of a 17 year old adolescent girl wrote, *“Losing control of the situation, quick to anger. No-resolution of issues causing conflict”*. Mothers’ reports were focused on their sense of having to juggle between being a warm, receptive and

tolerant parent and a fair disciplinarian. This mother said, *“Maintaining your stance on the situation – maternal feelings strongly to not make child unhappy”* and another commented, *“Trying to get a point across re making right choices and trying not to be judgmental or perceived to be judgmental”*.

4. Parent-adolescent conflict creates negative but short-term view of oneself.

Parent-adolescent conflict was found to adversely affect adolescents and parents' self-image but the effects were reported to be temporary. For adolescents, a sense of disappointment in their ability to interact more positively with their parents was created, while a sense of self-doubt and inadequacy was present among the parents.

Adolescents' perceptions. Although five adolescents stated that the conflict with their parents had little to none impact on their self-perception the rest of the adolescents stated that their self-worth was markedly undermined by their experience of conflict with their parents. Statements from several adolescents speak to that effect, *“I see myself as the dumb one”*, *“I see myself as an idiot”*, *“I always feel I maybe acting ungratefully”*, *“I see myself as mad.”* With the exception of three adolescents who stated that immediately after the conflict with their parents they felt *“calm”*, *“not affected at all”* and *“I usually act as normal”*, the most pervasive feelings expressed by the remaining number of adolescents included feeling upset, disappointed, sad and angry. One adolescent commented, *“I always cry if I am angry (really angry) and I go to my room”*, another stated, *“Most of the time I get really upset and sometimes cry”*. They sometimes felt ignored, belittled and ridiculed.

Parents' perceptions. Parents' descriptions of their adolescents' self-image after the conflict indicated that they were mostly aware of their adolescents' experiences of parent-adolescent conflict. Mothers seemed more attentive than fathers to their adolescents' behaviours and feelings after the conflict. Parents, whose adolescents reported that their self-image was negatively affected by the conflict, viewed their adolescents as being disturbed,

withdrawn and remorseful and feeling sad, upset and angry. One mother said, *“Their view of themselves is disturbing and they want to be left alone”*, another mother wrote, *“At time (I am sure) she feels that she is under too much pressure from parents and having strict parents”*, and a mother of a 14 year old adolescent girl said, *“Probably in a negative way, poor self-esteem”*. Parents, whose adolescents stated that their self-image remained unaffected after the conflict, expressed a similar view of their children’s self-esteem.

Parents also experienced a decline in their sense of self-worth after the conflict. Generally, both parents tended to question their ability to adequately manage conflicts with their adolescents. They often felt challenged and unsure how well they dealt with the conflict. For example, *“Conflict with my adolescents causes self-doubt”*. Some gender differences were observed among the parents in this sample. Mothers’ reactions reflected a sense of sadness and inadequacy while fathers’ reactions reflected a sense of frustration about the conflict not being resolved. One mother wrote, *“I feel incapable and ill-equipped to deal with an adolescent”*, another mother stated, *“Question whether I handled it okay”*. One fathers stated feeling “disappointed” with himself in regard to his reactions during the conflict, while for two fathers conflict created feelings of frustration and exhaustion, *“I sometimes get upset and angry”* and *“Sometimes exhausted and wish for an easier life”*. In the case of a father of a 17 year old adolescent girl conflict triggered the following reactions, *“Shame, low-self-esteem, anger and sadness”*.

5. Parent-adolescent conflict does not affect peer relationships and school/work performance. The areas of life families perceived to be unaffected by parent-adolescent conflict were peer relations, academic achievements and work performance. Adolescents and parents perceptions about whether parent-adolescent conflict impacts adolescents’ friendships and school performance were symmetrical, they both viewed these areas of life as independent of their home life.

Adolescents' perceptions. In regard to the school performance, a couple of adolescents reported that their school performance may vary as a result of conflict with their parents, for example one adolescent said: *"When things get hard at home I tend to bludge off school so it varies"*. However, most adolescents stated that the conflict with their parents had no impact on their school performance as is illustrated by the following statements, *"At school if I have had a disagreement I would just forget about it"*, *"As good as possible – don't let personal life interfere"* and *"I'm usually pretty unaffected by it"*.

In regard to the peer relations, adolescents in this study reported that they remained intact during and after parent-adolescent conflict. In fact, from the adolescents' perception peer relationships serve as a source of support and reprieve from conflict with parents. One adolescent boy stated, *"Quiet, we talk about it and I feel better"*, while two 17 year-old adolescent girls from two different families expressed almost identical experience of their peer relationships, *"I am happy and chatty around my friends, I feel I can be myself"* and *"I act like myself because they accept me for who I am"*.

Parents' perceptions. With an exception of one family where a differing perception of impact of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescents' peer relationships and school performance was made by parents and their 17 year-old daughter, two mothers and one father stated being uncertain as to whether the conflict had an effect on their adolescent children while one parent expressed the same uncertainty about their child's school performance. The reports from most other parents reflected the same views as those expressed by their adolescent children that peer relationships and school performance remained intact irrespective of parent-adolescent conflict. In terms of school performance, one mother wrote, *"Don't think it is. Unless it's making it better. She always does well and is perfect at school. She saves her bad behaviour for home"*. In terms of peer relationships, parents of a 14 year old daughter commented, (mother) *"Not at all, interaction with peers preferable to with her*

parents”, (father) *“Don’t believe so. Perhaps complains to peers about parents on occasion”*.

The view that peer relationships are increasingly more important to adolescents and provide support at times of conflict with parents was reflected in a statement of several parents, as in a case of one mother who wrote, *“Peers become allies”*.

No harmful effect of parent-adolescent conflict on parents’ work performance and peer relationship was reported in the case of 32 out of 35 parents. To the question about the interaction between parent-adolescent conflict and parents’ work performance most parents stated, *“All good”*, *“No effect”* or *“I don’t let it interfere with my work”*. In the case of two fathers and one mother the interaction was described as negative. For example, one father stated, *“It interferes with my concentration at work”*, the other wrote, *“At work I am less productive, have fewer interactions and am quicker to anger”* while the third parent (mother) reported, *“Feel tired and dispondant [sic] which can affect productivity”*. In response to the question about the interaction between parent-adolescent conflict and parents’ peer relationship 32 out of 35 parents found sharing their experiences with and releasing their emotions to their friends valuable and helpful. This finding is equally shared by parents of both genders. For example, two fathers reported, *“I have lots of teenager war stories I swap with local dads”*, and *“Swap stories and ideas”*, while three mothers commented, *“Happy to discuss with my peers in general. This has been helpful”*; *“I like sharing ideas with my peers re parenting”*; and *“I sometimes discuss to vent and get feedback”*. In the case of three mothers, the interaction between parent-adolescent conflict and peer relationships was found to have adverse effect. Although one mother said that her relationship with her peers is sometimes affected by the conflict with her two adolescent daughters, the other two mothers described the negative impact as following, *“Carrying the problem into interactions with peers”* and *“It does – feel a bit of tension towards the parents who let their kids run wild”*.

6. Parent-child relationship has changed since the onset of adolescence. Parents were asked to provide their view of whether the relationship with their child/ren has changes since the onset of adolescence and with the exception of two parents, all other parents expressed a view that the relationship has changed. In general, parents recognise the necessity of renegotiating family roles and being adaptable in order to better manage their children's transition through adolescence. Although parents endorsed the view that their adolescents still require parental guidance, reliance and support more than half of parents now regard their adolescents as more mature individuals rather than young children. In line with this view these parents stated that a more adult based relationship has developed between them and their adolescents. For example, mother of a 16 year-old adolescent girl stated, *"A more adult relationship has developed"* and a similar statement was made by mother of a 17 year old adolescent boy, *"I treat them more on an adult level"*. These parents reported that they encourage their adolescents to take on more responsibility for their actions and decisions and that through changing their relationship they have more appreciation and understanding for each other. Father of a 15 year old adolescent boy wrote, *"I credit him (gradually) with more responsibility"*, and mother of 14 year old adolescent girl and 16 year old adolescent boy wrote, *"We can have more mature discussions, I can ask for their opinion re various matters"*. For 12 parents in this study the relationship with their adolescents has become more complex, entailing more arguments and less clear knowledge of how to adjust to their adolescents' increasing maturity. For six out of the 12 parents their adolescent children have become more resistant to discipline, are more opinionated and engage in more parent-adolescent conflicts. The remaining six parents showed greater concern with their role as a parent as reported by one mother in regard to the complexity of the relationship with her adolescent daughter, *"Find it hard to know when to let it go & what is stepping over the*

line“. For the mother of a 14 year old girl the relationship has changed insofar that at times she feels unimportant and not needed

7. Utilisation and effectiveness of different conflict resolution strategies.

Adolescents' and parents' self reports revealed a range of different strategies they use to resolve parent-adolescent conflict which include communication with a view of compromising, apologising, avoidance, punishment, yelling, combination of different strategies, and no resolution method. Based on the adolescents' reports, avoidance and apologising were the most often used ways to resolve conflict followed by communication with an aim of reaching a compromise. The least frequently used resolution methods by adolescents were yelling, punishment and submission. On the other hand, parents reported using communication with a view of reaching a compromise most of the time followed by a combination of different strategies, mainly cooling off, communicating and/or punishment and apologising. Unlike adolescents, parents reported little use of apologising and punishment and no use of avoidance strategies. Adolescents and parents responses to this question and their reports on the effectiveness of the conflict resolution strategies they use are provided below.

Adolescents' perceptions. The most frequently used methods to resolve conflict from the adolescents' point of view are apologising and avoiding conflict. In terms of avoiding the conflict an 18 year-old adolescent girl stated, *“Just change the subject or walk away”* or in the case of a 17 year-old adolescent girl, *“Silence and sitting in anger before someone makes small talk, generally parents start talking”*. In terms of apologising a 16 year old adolescent girl wrote, *“Sometimes/mostly resolved with an apology”*. Similarly a 12 year-old adolescent boy wrote, *“We start talking and apologise”* and two 14 year-old adolescent girls stated, *“With me apologising”* and *“I usually apologise”*. In some instances the apology was preceded with a short break from the conflict as in this example, *“We would generally just*

sleep on it and then apologise in the morning". The two methods of resolving conflict adolescents stated they use most of the time to resolve conflict with their parents. Only in the case of one adolescent girl, apologising was reported as a strategy used by her father with whom she has most conflict, and she wrote, *"Usually my parent comes and apologises for yelling"*. The next conflict resolution strategy after apologising and avoiding adolescents reported using is communication. Adolescents described using communication with a view of reaching a compromise and often communication followed after a period of a cool-off time. Some adolescents in this group gave one word answers such as *"communicate"* or *"compromise"* while others provided more elaborate responses such as, *"A short while after, we have cooled down and begun talking as usual"*. The least used methods of resolving conflict according to adolescents are punishment and yelling. Only three adolescents reported these methods in their questionnaire, one wrote, *"Shouting"*, another stated, *"Screaming until we forget what we were arguing about"*, and the third one reported, *"I get sent to my room or I get punished"*.

In terms of the effectiveness of the strategies used to resolve conflict adolescents expressed a view that avoidance is an effective strategy in resolving conflict with their parents, *"Good – cause its always how its resolved"*, while apologising was described as effective when used in combination with either cooling off or communicating. For example, a 12 year-old adolescent girl commented, *"It mostly works pretty well, because by the next morning we would generally be in a better mood and would have had time to think it over"*. Communication was perceived as a strategy that works well, as illustrated in the statement made by a 17 year-old adolescent girl, *"The only way that works"*. The adolescents stated that the least frequently used strategies, yelling and punishment, work. For example, a 14 year-old girl replied in regard to the yelling strategy, *"Sure it works. It's not ideal but it works"*.

Parents' perceptions. Communication was the most frequently used method of resolving conflict based on the reports provided by the parents. Some parents provided one word responses *"talking"* or *"communicating"*, whereas other made the following statements, *"Talk about the impacts the conflict is having on the particular situation"* or *"Conversation and discussion and trying to do it in calmly manner"*. For most parents communication was used to attain a compromise as illustrated in the following statements, *"To try and both see each other's point of view"*, *"Trying to get a point across re making right choices and trying not to be judgemental or perceived judgemental"* and *"Discussion and some concession and agreement between us and a hug to show no bad feelings"*. A combination of cooling off, communicating and yelling/punishment was less used than communication but still used more in favour of punishment, apologising and avoidance. In each combination of different conflict resolution strategies communication was an inevitable part while all other strategies varied across parents' reports. For example, a father of two adolescent children wrote regarding a combination of strategies he uses to resolve conflict with his children, *"1. Discuss reasons for conflict, 2. Consider their position and explain mine, 3. Threaten and impose punishment"* while a mother of an adolescent girl stated, *"First shouting (often). Then consequences or actions (e.g., one of us will go to our room, either voluntary or on a request). Followed up with a conversation to sort things out when things are calmer"*. The next conflict resolution strategy parents reported using was no resolution which although used less than communication and combination of different strategies was found to be used more frequently than punishment and apologising. The following statement made by a mother of an adolescent girl reflects this finding, *"Generally not a lot gets resolved in anger. Just waiting until my adolescent gets older and more sensible. That's what I hope anyway"*. Similarly parents of an 18 year-old adolescent girl stated, *"Not really resolved"* and *"Not resolved often and refusal to listen"*. The least preferred methods the

parents reported using to resolve conflict were punishment and apologising. Avoidance was a conflict resolution strategy no parent reported using.

In terms of the effectiveness of the strategies parents reported using to resolve conflict with their adolescents both communication and combination of different strategies were described as very effective and beneficial in the long run as the following statement from one of the fathers in this study shows, *“Quite effective: usually results in a permanent change”*. For a smaller proportion of the parents who use these strategies they seem to work either sometimes or in a short term. For example, a father of two adolescent children (a boy and a girl) wrote, *“Depends on the mood of the teenager”*, another father stated, *“Works for a day”* and one mother commented, *“As effective as a parent can be, dealing with an adolescents. Sometimes it just depends on which way the wind is blowing”*. The parents, who reported using no resolution as a way to deal with conflict with their adolescents, described this strategy as being ineffective. Similar opinion was provided by the parents who reported using punishment and apologising with a difference of these strategies being described as somewhat effective at times as the statement of one father who uses punishment reflects, *“We still argue a lot! Effective in stopping the argument at the time but not in preventing it arising again soon”*.

8. Parents’ and adolescents’ views on how to improve their conflict resolution strategies. Both adolescents and parents provided equal number of alternatives for their own use and for the use by the other party to better resolve conflict between them. The adolescents mainly focused on how they alone as well as they and their parents jointly can improve ways of resolving their conflict. On the other hand, suggestions to improve conflict resolution strategies made by the parents were evenly distributed across those for use by parents, those for use by adolescents and those for use by parents and adolescents together.

Adolescents' suggestions. In regard to improving their own conflict resolution strategies the adolescents' suggestions strongly enhanced cooperation with the view of being more patient, not answering back and toning down their behaviour. The suggestion made by a 16 year-old adolescent girl adequately summarises this finding, *"I could learn to co-operate better with my parents' wishes and work with them so that we can come to a logical agreement"*. In regard to how both they and their parents can improve conflict resolution strategies they currently use the adolescents emphasised strongly the necessity for both sides to be more understanding of each other and to listen to each other more. Some adolescents made succinct suggestions such as *"See eye to eye"* or *"By not disagreeing"* and *"By listening"* while the comment of a 12 year old adolescent girl reflects the view of those adolescents who made more elaborate suggestions, *"If I were to not back chat and if they were to listen to my whole story before getting angry"*. In respect to how the parents can improve their conflict resolution strategies, firstly, only a few suggestions were made by the adolescents and secondly, the suggestions pointed to adolescents wanting more respect from their parents. For example, *"If the people in my family admit their wrongs like I do, it would be a start"* a 17 year-old adolescent girl stated. A 13 year-old adolescent boy wrote, *"They stop teasing me"* and an 18 year-old adolescent girl stated, *"If they don't take their anger out on me for things that have nothing to do with me"*. In line with wanting to be more respected one adolescent girl who comes from a divorced family commented, *"Most of the time the fights are about one parent saying something about the other parent, so if they stopped saying things, fighting would be reduced"*. Again, only a few reports made by the adolescents contained no suggestion for improving methods currently used in their family to resolve conflict. One adolescent expressed uncertainty about how the conflicts could be reduced while the others were of the opinion that the conflict cannot be reduced. For one adolescent girl the conflicts represent *"a natural part of human interaction"*.

Parents' suggestions. In respect to the alternative methods of conflict resolution parents proposed for their own use the strongest message was to be more rational. The parents expressed a necessity for their current strategies of conflict resolution to be less heated and to contain more clear information about what is expected from adolescents. This message is illustrated in the comments written by several fathers, *"Take a step back before asking questions"*, *"Don't just react"*, *"I need to think before I speak"* and *"Explain more thoroughly what (& why) is expected regarding acceptable behaviour"*. An equally strong message, made by the parents, involved adolescents and parents to co-operatively change their methods of conflict resolution, mainly through constant and continuing communication. Some parents highlighted the importance of being more accepting and trusting of their adolescents' increasing maturity, such as this mother, *"Give and take. Trust them a little bit more each time they step a bit further into growing up"* and this mother, *"Continuing to become more mature and able to accept each other's opinion"*. Somewhat less strong view of alternative ways of resolving conflict expressed by the parents was that adolescence as a developmental stage is a more influential factor than parents and adolescents' ability to resolve conflict. The parents reported that parent-adolescent conflict are an inherent part of adolescence and as such is viewed as unresolvable. The following statements from several parents are provided in support of this view, *"Only growing up and realising that parents deserve respect will her conflicts stop"*, *"Not sure – is it all a part of growing up and maturing and passing the stage of selfishness and 'what's it for me' "*, and *"I am not sure I want them reduced. Conflict is how we establish new boundaries. Sometimes are conflicts are calm, sometimes very heated. Each conflict event teaches us something new – moves the boundaries – helps us all grow up"*. Very few parents were of the opinion that parent-adolescent conflicts can be reduced by adolescents being less defiant and more accepting of

parents' instructions. For example, *"By the adolescent doing what is expected of them"* and *"Adolescent accepting their role in a household as a productive e member of team"*.

9. Low, medium and high level of parent-adolescent conflict and conflict resolution.

The main categories of conflict resolution strategies identified through the qualitative analysis, include Submission, Communication, Avoidance, Grounding, Time Out and No Resolution. Participants who reported low level of conflict with their parents stated using Submission and Communication more than Avoidance and Grounding to resolve the conflict. Some of the participants from this group stated that at times a combination of different conflict resolution strategies was employed to ameliorate the conflict. Communication and Time-Out were described as the most effective method of conflict resolution that aimed at reaching a compromise. Submission, described as non-coercive compliance with parents' expectations, was rated moderately effective. Avoidance, Grounding and No Resolution were strategies perceived to be least productive in resolving conflict with parents.

Adolescents reported that Submission was most practised way of resolving conflict with their parents while parents reported that Communication was the preferred method of conflict resolution. Effectiveness ratings of the reported types of conflict resolution strategies replicate those of the participants who reported low level of parent-adolescent conflict.

Results obtained from the participants who reported high level of conflict resolution show that Submission with coercion, Avoidance and No Resolution were the most used ways of conflict resolution. These types of strategies were described to entail coercion, aggression and refusal to listen. Arguing was another feature of ineffective conflict resolution methods. Use of ineffective methods of conflict resolution supports of the findings obtained from the qualitative analysis which highlight that high level of parent-adolescent conflict may be attributed to the lack of appropriate conflict resolution strategies.

The next step in the grounded theory analysis of the data provided by the 21 family units in this sample is to identify a theory based on the above stated themes. To identify the theory an additional tool, Leximancer (Version 4), was used to provide another level of reliability to qualitative analysis of the data from this study. The themes produced with Leximancer are reported below and discussed according to their level of importance. The overall map of concepts is displayed in Figure 3 and themes that emerged from the analysis are displayed in Figure 4.

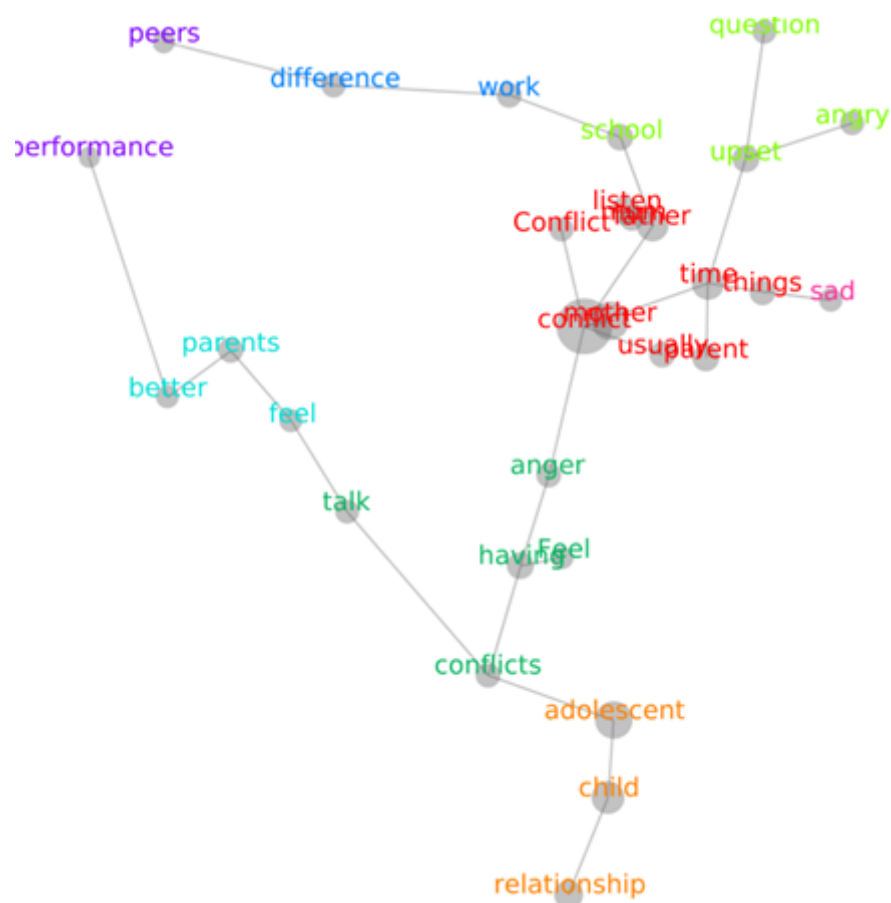


Figure 3. Leximancer conceptual cloud of study 2 concepts.

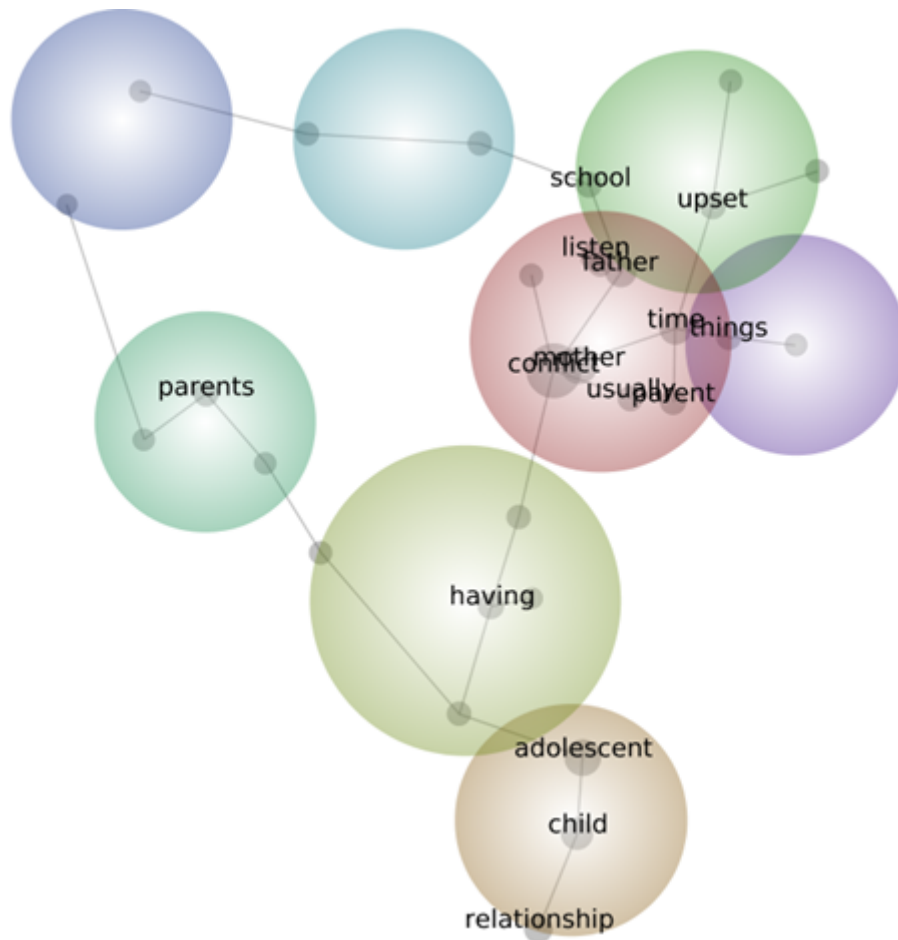


Figure 4. Leximancer conceptual map of Study 2 themes.

The theme “Conflict”, represented with a red circle, was rated 100% relevant to the research question. The main concept in this theme is *conflict*, which is connected to the concepts *mother*, *parent*, *time*, *father* and *listen*. Overall, this theme reflects the presence of conflicts between parents and adolescents. Looking at specific concepts within this theme and their proximity to the main concept *conflict*, the strongest relationship is between the concepts *conflict* and *mother* indicating that conflicts most frequently occur between adolescents and their mothers. The participants’ self-reports support this finding as evidenced in their statements of conflict with mothers being more frequent than the conflict with fathers. The concept *time* is linked to the main concept *conflict* through the concept *mother*. This link points to the theme of mothers relying on time as a means of resolving conflict. The reports provided by the mothers reflect their hope that in time their adolescent children will become

more mature and consequently the conflicts will subside, as stated by a mother of two adolescent girls. *“Only growing up and realising that parents deserve respect will her conflicts stop”*.

Although conflicts with mothers are more frequent, conflict with fathers are also present as indicated by the concept *father* being linked to the main concept *conflict*. The concept *listen*, attached to the concept *father*, points to listening being the key issue in the conflict between adolescents and fathers. The following examples reflect this theme: *“They don’t listen and they make fun of what I’m saying”* (13 and a half year old adolescent boy). *“I get in trouble and they don’t listen to my side/point”* (14 year-old adolescent girl). *“When they don’t listen and mumble when they respond”* (father of a 17 year-old adolescent boy). *“They don’t listen”* (father of a 14 year-old adolescent boy).

The theme “Adolescent”, represented with the orange circle, was rated to be 34% relevant to the research question. This theme is indirectly connected to the theme “Conflict” through the theme “Having”. The backchannel connection between the two strongest themes indicates that the presence of parent-adolescent disagreements has an indirect impact on the relationship between adolescents and parents. More specifically, experiencing parent-adolescent disagreements elicits feelings of anger more so for the adolescents than for the parents. These feelings of anger in turn lead to different experience of the relationship between parents and adolescents. The adolescents feel being treated as children by their parents while the parents feel that the relationship with their adolescents has changed. The following statements show how the parents and adolescents perceive the stated changes in their relationship. *“Being treated like a baby”* (response given by a 13 year-old adolescent boy to the question about the most difficult aspect to having disagreements with parents). *“A more adult relationship has developed”* (mother of 16 year-old adolescent girl). *“He is encouraged to take more responsibility for his actions and decisions – an approaching adult*

relationship” (mother of 15 year-old adolescent boy). “*More amount of conflict*” (father of 18 year old adolescent girl). “*Find it hard to know when to let it go and what is stepping over the line*” (mother of 17 year-old adolescent girl). “*The relationship seems more highly strung on both of us*” (mother of 18 year-old adolescent girl).

The concept *talk*, located along the outer line of the circle closer to the theme Parents, is connected to the main concept via the concept *conflicts*. This positioning of the concepts *having* and *talk* indicates that parents and adolescents talk about their disagreements but that communication and talking seems to be emphasised more by the parents than the adolescents. The comments provided to the question how participants behave immediately after they had an argument are reported here to illustrate the link between the concepts *having* and *talk*. “*I walk to my room to be alone so I don’t as you would say ‘lose my nerves’*” (17 year-old adolescent girl). “*I just go to my room for as long as it takes for me to calm down*” (12 year-old adolescent girl). “*Give the silent treatment, don’t talk or if forced give one word answers*” (17 year-old adolescent girl). Parents’ comments about their adolescents’ behaviour immediately after the disagreements coincide with those provided by the adolescents. For example, “*They want to be left alone*” (mother of two adolescent girls). “*Needs time to adjust*” (mother of a 14 year-old adolescent boy). “*Goes quiet*” (father of 15 year-old adolescent girl). “*Quite for a small amount of time and then ok*” (mother of 17 year-old adolescent girl).

The parents’ responses in relation to their own actions following disagreements with their adolescents demonstrate talking being their preferred choice. “*I try to repair after the rupture. Talking through – after the time has elapsed*” (father of 15 year-old adolescent boy). “*Calm discussion at a later time*” (mother of 17 year-old adolescent boy).

The concepts *feel*, *anger* and *conflicts* reflect participants’ feelings at the time of disagreements between them. Although different feelings were reported by the participants,

the most prominent feeling that emerged from the analysis is anger, which is located close to the main theme “Conflict”, reflecting the presence of this feeling around the time of disagreements between the parents and adolescents. The following statements from adolescents provide illustration of this connection, “*Anger*”, “*I see myself as an idiot*” by a 17 year-old adolescent girl, “*I feel angry and impatient, annoyed*” by a 16 year-old adolescent girl, and “*Most of the time I get really upset and sometimes even cry*” by a 13 year-old adolescent boy.

The parents’ responses about their adolescents’ feelings after they had a disagreement concur with the responses provided by the adolescents. “*She is very upset, sometimes angry, depressed (?), sad*” by a father of an 18 year-old adolescent girl, “*Few times angry, sometimes sad*” by a mother of two adolescent children), and “*Sometimes moody and verbally abusive toward parents*” by a father of two adolescent children.

In regard to their own feelings the parents expressed feeling angry (upset or frustrated) and doubtful of their parenting most of the time. Feelings of exhaustion and sadness are also frequently reported responses by the parents. Examples include: “*If I’ve been angry I feel down on myself, I’ll be sad and apologetic or annoyed or short-tempered with other things (mild)*” (mother of 15 year-old adolescent boy. “*I see myself as a bad parent and I stay angry for a while*” and “*It causes self-doubt, I feel defeated, prayerful*” (father and mother of an 18 year-old adolescent girl). “*I feel incapable and ill-equipped to deal with an adolescent*” and “*Sometimes I feel exhausted and wish for an easier life. Occasionally upset and need my own time out*” (mother and father of 14 year-old adolescent girl).

The Theme “Upset”, represented with the light green circle, was rated 17% relevant to the research question. The main concept in this theme, *upset* is connected to the concepts *angry* and *question*. The concept *school* although encircled within this theme is not directly connected to the concept *upset*, instead it is linked through the concepts *time*, *mother*,

conflicts, *father* and *listen* within the “Conflict” theme. This implies that school seems to be an issue parents and adolescents have disagreements over and that this issue is more prevalent within the disagreements between fathers and adolescents. This is further supported with the finding that the theme “Upset” overlaps with the theme “Conflict” at the section where the concepts *father* and *listen* are located. Lastly, disagreements over school seem to lead to participants feeling upset. For example: “*The difference between disagreements with mother and disagreements with father is that with mother it is mostly about every day things and father usually school related*” (14 year-old adolescent girl). This adolescent further stated that she feels disappointed and angry when she and her father argue and the adolescent’s father reported, “*The way conflict affects me is that sometimes I get upset and angry*”.

The concepts *angry* and *question* adds more weight to the finding that parent-adolescent disagreements have an adverse effect on the participants’ emotional state. Parents question their ability to properly parent their adolescent children while adolescents perceive themselves as incompetent and unreasonable for the way they react to the disagreements. The following statements exemplify this finding: “*The worst part is realising every moment what a bitch I’ve been, whether it be hours or minutes that I’m in there (her room)*” (12 year old adolescent girl). “*I feel like a dumb one*” (15 year old boy). “*I always feel I may be acting ungrateful, but feel like I’m not being listened to also*” (18 year old adolescent girl). “*Am I too harsh and difficult to deal with?*” (mother of adolescent boy and girl). “*Causes self-doubt*” (mother of 18 year-old girl). “*Question whether I handled it ok*” (mother of 17 year-old boy).

The next theme according to its relevance to the research questions, stated at 8% is the Theme “Parents”. This theme is represented with the dark green circle and is located on the left of the map and is connected to the main theme “Conflict” via the theme “Having”. The main concept, *parents*, is connected to the concepts *better* and *feel*. The concept *feel* is

situated near the outer line of the circle and closer to the concept *talk* from the theme “Having”. The proximity of these two concepts in addition to the presence of the concept *better* highlights that for parents talking leads to feeling better. For example, one mother stated that she resolves disagreements with her 16 year old adolescent girl mainly through discussion and who also discusses with her peers “*how they handle/d similar situations*” described her emotional state after the disagreements as “*conciliatory, loving and caring*”.

The Theme “Work”, rated 7% relevant to the research questions is comprised of the concepts *work* and *difference*. The concept *work* is close to the concept *school* from the neighbouring theme “Upset” indicating that parent-adolescent disagreements have little impact on the adolescents’ school performance and parents’ performance at work. The following statements demonstrate this finding: “*I don’t let it interfere with my work*” (mother of 13 and 17 year-old adolescent girls). “*Well (I think), my grades are usually A to A+*” (18 year-old adolescent girl).

The themes least rated to the research questions with the ranking of 2% are the theme “Peers” and the theme “Sad”. The theme “Peers” is represented with the indigo blue circle and its main concept *peers* is encircled with the concept *performance*. These two concepts are not directly connected as they are attached to two different lines of themes. The concept *peers* is linked to the main theme “Conflicts” through the themes “Upset and “Work”, while the concept *performance* is linked to the main theme “Conflicts” through the themes “Having” and “Parents”. The location and proximity of the concept *peers* and *performance* indicate that for parents and adolescents their peer relations and performance at school and work seem to be the least affected by their conflicts. Examples of participants not being affected by parent-adolescent disagreements are provided in the previous theme. In regard to peer relations some of the participants’ statements are reported below. “*Interactions with peers are fine*” or “*No affect at all on peer interactions*”. “*I swap stories and ideas with my peers*” (father of an 18

year old adolescent girl). *“I sometimes discuss conflicts with my adolescent with my peers to vent and get feedback”* (mother of 17 year old adolescent girl). *“I discuss with my peers how they handle/d similar situations”* (mother of a 16 year old adolescent girl).

The theme “Sad”, represented with the purple circle comprises a single concept *sad*, which is located on the right of the map and it overlaps with the main theme “Conflict”. The proximity of these two themes reflects the finding that parent-adolescent disagreements are associated with sad feelings in both the adolescents and the parents. The theme “Sad” also overlaps with the theme “Upset” which is another feeling that was found to often accompany the participants’ experience of the disagreements between them. The overlapping effect between the theme Sad and the other two theme further supports the finding that feelings of sadness and the feelings of anger, upset and frustration embedded in other themes are strongly associated with parent-adolescent disagreements. Examples of the emergent feelings are reported in previous themes.

Conclusion

The results regarding the characteristics of parent-adolescent conflict show that families in the current sample perceive conflict to increase in frequency with the onset of adolescence and the majority also indicate that the conflict is not intense. Unlike the participants from the first study, who reported that conflict started in middle adolescence, participants in this study reported that conflict commenced in early adolescence. However, the issues of which families report they often argue/d are the same as those reported in the first study. Themes derived from the families’ self-reports expressed participants’ view of parent-adolescent conflict as normal and unavoidable part of their relationship. Conflict between adolescents and parents had different features depending on the gender of the parent and the family environment. Both adolescents and parents perceived conflict between them to be difficult, mainly due to the complex feelings that succeed the conflict. The feelings related

to parent-adolescent conflict have been shown to negatively affect both adolescents and parents' self-image. The effects are short-term and do not spill over other areas of the parents' or adolescents' lives. Furthermore, peer relationships seem to be helpful in terms of provision of support and an opportunity to learn additional conflict resolution strategies. Families resolve conflict with a range of different methods. According to parents, communication is the preferred method of resolving conflict and according to adolescents apologising, submission and occasional communication are favoured methods of resolving conflict. For some families, a combination of different strategies is their method of resolving parent-adolescent conflict. Communication is the parents' preferred method of resolving conflict while adolescents reported that although communication was present it was not sufficient for them to feel listened to and their issues acknowledged. The suggested method of conflict resolution was communication. Both parent and adolescent participants stated in their self-reports that they often felt that they were not being listened during arguments. The adolescents stated that they feel that their parents do not listen to their side of the argument, while the parents stated that adolescents do not respect their opinions and are resistant to accept given directives. However, the effects of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescents and parents' self-image are transitory and generally leave no permanent marking on their overall psychological well-being.

Chapter 10: Discussion

Past research has shown that low to medium levels of conflict are a normative aspect of parent-adolescent relationships but that intense levels of conflict are not. The present investigation was designed to examine differences between families that experience low to moderate levels of conflict and those families that experience intense levels of conflict.

Specifically, three research questions were addressed:

1. How do adolescents and parents experience parent-adolescent conflict characteristics, i.e. conflict presence, onset, frequency, intensity and topics?
2. Are there differences in the types of conflict resolution strategies a) used by adolescents and parents and b) across low, medium and high levels of parent-adolescent conflict?
3. Are there differences in the overall level of well-being of adolescents and parents who experience low, medium or high levels of parent-adolescent conflict?

The research questions were addressed with the inclusion of multiple informants, use of qualitative analysis and the use of both retrospective and current exploration. The investigation was conducted as a sequence of two related, yet separate studies. The first study was a retrospective investigation of young adults' experience of parent-adolescent conflict during their own adolescence. The second study was a comparative investigation of both parents' and adolescents' experience of parent-adolescent disagreements. Data from both studies was qualitatively analysed with some quantitative statistics performed to achieve better integration of the findings. Challenges encountered during recruitment of participants for the two studies were identified and ways of overcoming the challenges presented in the

relevant chapter. Findings from the two studies are discussed next within the context of the current research and literature on parent-adolescent conflict.

In relation to the first research question of how do adolescents and parents experience parent-adolescent conflict characteristics, the aggregate findings in the present investigation concur with the findings from previous studies. More specifically, in relation to the *conflict presence* for most young adults in the first study and families in the second study parent-adolescent conflict is a normal part of their daily family interactions. In fact, participants perceived the conflict as an integral part of their family dynamics and their own individual development. This is consistent with the literature on parent-adolescent disagreements that states that the presence of disagreements with parents during adolescence is normal, that it happens in most families and represents a vital factor in adolescents' development as autonomous and independent individuals (Laursen et al., 1998; Smetana et al., 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

In relation to the *conflict onset*, findings from the two studies differ insofar that for majority of the young adults in the first study the conflict started in middle adolescence whereas for most families in the second study the conflict commenced in early adolescence. Findings from the first study seem to concur with earlier studies which purport that parent-adolescent conflict starts in early adolescence, peaks in middle adolescence and declines in late adolescence (e.g. Montemayor, 1983). Findings from the second study seem to concur with findings from more recent studies which show that the conflict is highest during early adolescence after which it follows a receding trajectory and continues to decline during late adolescence (Laursen et al, 1998). The difference in the participants' reports from the two studies may be attributed to the different methodologies used in the two studies. The first study was designed as a retrospective investigation of the research questions while the second study explored the same research questions from the participants' present point of view. The

research on the effectiveness of different study methodologies has found that when participants are asked to retrospectively recall past experiences of conflict their recollection tends to include more intense and salient experiences of conflict (Burk et al. 2009).

Conversely, when participants are asked to recall conflict closer to the present time, their recollection tends to include less intense and more day-to-day arguments. It is possible that due to the retrospective recollection of the young adults' experience of conflict with their parents, their reports referred to the times when the conflict was intense rather than when it started, and thus used those conflicts as the time defining criterion for the conflict onset.

In relation to the *conflict frequency*, the combined findings from the two studies support the findings from previous studies that conflict with parents is higher during adolescence compared to childhood and adulthood (Smetana et al., 2006). For participants in the present investigation the conflict frequency varied between a few times a week to a few times a fortnight. More specifically, in the case of the young adults, the conflict occurred on a weekly to fortnightly basis. For the adolescents the conflict occurred between once a week and a few times a fortnight and for the parents, a few times a week. Although a slight difference in the conflict frequency between adolescent' and parents' reports was obtained, the overall frequency across the two studies is consistent with the previous research which states that the usual number of conflicts ranges between two to three a day to a few times a week (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Smetana et al., 2006).

Regarding the *conflict intensity*, findings from both studies of the present investigation again support the current research that conflict, although frequent, is usually not intense. Similar to the findings from studies by Allison and Schultz (2004) and Riesch et al (2000) the conflict intensity reported by the participants in the present investigation was found to range between not intense to moderately intense. A small portion of the participants

from the two samples reported intense parent-adolescent conflicts. For these participants the conflict is still prevalent and usually elicits high levels of emotional intensity.

Topics over which the conflict between parents and adolescents most often occurred predominantly concerned issues of adolescents' increased autonomy, independence and personal jurisdiction. They included household duties, personal belongings, school related issues and fights with siblings. These were the issues that also generated some intense discussions. In the case of the young adults the conflicts were mainly focused on those issues they regarded as their personal belongings, such as clothes, school related activities and who should be their friends whereas for the participants in the second study communication between adolescents and parents, such as talking back to parents, topped the list of the most frequently argued topics. Topics such as sex, drug use, lying and money were ranked as the least likely topics to generate parent-adolescent conflicts. As highlighted by previous studies (e.g. Ozmete & Bayoglu, 2009; Renk et al., 2005) the topics over which parents and adolescents tend to argue the most reflect adolescents' growing need for individuation away from their families which the findings from the present investigation confirmed. The topics that received the lowest ranking seem to be those considered sensitive topics and thus tend to create some uneasiness on the part of both parents and adolescents and consequently are discussed less often.

Participants in the present investigation perceived disagreements with mothers to differ from those with fathers as a function of participants' age, gender and the quality of parent-adolescents relationship, findings largely found to be consistent across the extant research and literature (Renk, Liljequist, Simpson, & Phares, 2005; Smetana, 2011; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Qualitative analysis of the information provided by the participants in the two studies revealed that more frequent conflicts were reported between early and middle adolescents and their parents and male adolescents and their parents.

Conflict with parents during late adolescence was regarded to be less frequent and either not intense or moderately intense while the conflict was described to be moderately intense during early and middle adolescents. Compared to female adolescents who regarded the conflict to be moderately intense, male adolescents perceived the conflicts to range from not intense to moderately intense.

Conflict with mothers was more frequent than conflict with fathers. Mother-adolescent conflict was not intense and usually centred on the mundane issues of household responsibilities, personal hygiene and mother-child interactions. Conflict with fathers, on the other hand, was described as less frequent but more intense and usually concerned issues related to school responsibilities and adolescent-parent communication.

Mothers were perceived to be more approachable, tolerant and conciliatory. They were perceived to be easier to talk with and to discuss matters of a more private nature. With the exception of three young adults from the first study and one family from the second study mothers were described as prone to be overprotective and likely to shout or yell during the conflicts without coming across as intimidating or overpowering. Fathers, compared to mothers, were perceived as distant and less likely to engage in conversations on an emotional level and conflicts with fathers were perceived to be one-sided. In those families where mother-adolescent conflict and father-adolescent conflict was perceived to be the same, adolescents described their parents as having similar parenting approaches. In these families fathers and mothers were viewed to be approachable and engaging in their adolescents' lives. Overall, when parents were described to be strict disciplinarians who use control and coercion, feelings of fear and intimidation were reported by adolescents and young adults.

Age and gender related differences found in the present investigation largely support the existing literature. In relation to the age factor, early adolescents tend to have more frequent conflicts than middle and late adolescents and the conflicts are more intense for

middle adolescents than early and late adolescents (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Lerner & Steinberg, 2006). However, the results of the present investigation diverge from those of previous studies in relation to the intensity of the conflicts during late adolescence. Findings from the present investigation show that the conflicts seem to be the least intense during late adolescence whereas the literature states that conflicts in late adolescence tend to elicit more intense feelings as a result of late adolescents' advanced cognitive abilities compared to their younger counterparts (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Collins & Steinberg, 2006). A possible explanation for the diverging findings is that the late adolescents in the current investigation come from families with stable and supportive relationships and as such are more likely to have better understanding and communication with their parents.

The second research question addressed the issue of whether parents and adolescents use different conflict resolution strategies and whether different conflict resolution strategies contribute to the escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high conflict. The four main categories of conflict resolution strategies were identified through the qualitative analysis of the participants' reports and they include submission, communication, avoidance and punishment. When communication and submission with no coercion were used, low levels of parent-adolescent conflict were reported. When submission with no coercion was used most of the time followed by communication and avoidance, moderate levels of parent-adolescent conflict were reported. When submission with coercion and avoidance were the most used methods of conflict resolution, high levels of parent-adolescent conflict were reported.

Findings from the present investigation support current research on the preferred resolution strategies of parent-adolescent conflict that families use a variety of methods to resolve their conflicts (Branje et al. 2009; Smetana et al., 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002)). As in the case of studies by Reisch et al. (2003) and Cicognani and Zani (2009) which found

different methods of conflict resolution were reported by parents and adolescents, different conflict resolution strategies were reported by the participants in the present investigation. In the first study, young adults mostly used communication (dialogue with a view to reach compromise) and submission (compliance) and regarded these strategies as effective. Submission was rated effective only in those cases where young adults perceived their parents not to use coercion during the conflicts. When communication and submission with no coercion were used, they were regarded effective as the young adults felt they were treated with respect, trust and equality by their parents. Avoidance, submission with coercion and punishment (silence, arguing, deception) were used in a smaller number of cases and these strategies were rated ineffective in resolving conflict. When these conflict resolution strategies were used the young adults felt they were not listened to and their arguments were disregarded. More conciliatory methods of conflict resolution (e.g. communication) were associated with mothers while more submissive methods of conflict resolution (submission with and without coercion) were associated with fathers by the young adults.

In the second study, the most frequently used method of resolving conflict as reported by the parents was communication while according to the adolescents, it was submission, punishment and occasional communication. A combination of different strategies was also reported by a small number of families. The difference in the outcome for adolescents and parents' feelings in relation to talking during and after the conflict may be explained by the finding that the adolescents' self-reports seemed to indicate their sense of being restricted to express themselves fully to their parents. Adolescents saw their arguments as not important or valid for their parents to accept them. On the other hand, parents reported that they try to keep the lines of communication open during and after the conflicts with follow-up discussions carried out in view of reaching a compromise and resolution.

Communication was regarded as effective by both the parents and adolescents. However, in regard to the effectiveness of punishment and submission a discrepancy in the ratings across different families was found and it was linked to the quality of family environment present in those families. Families where adolescents and parents had good connection and shared warm, respectful environment these methods were perceived to be effective. Families where adolescents and parents engaged in aggressive and coercive interactions, these same conflict resolution strategies were perceived to be ineffective. No resolution was rated the least productive method of ameliorating family conflicts that led to more frequent and intense conflicts.

The alternative methods of conflict resolution proposed by the participants in the present investigation included ongoing communication and dialogue with a view of reaching compromise. More specific suggestions were also presented and included. Parents suggested that they could be more open to their adolescents' changing needs and have more patience during the parent-adolescent conflicts. According to the young adults and adolescents alternative behaviours that could be more productive and helpful in resolving conflict include that their parents listen more to their arguments and are more patient and understanding while they try to be more rational and reasonable in their ways of reacting to conflict. These suggestions align with conclusions embedded in the present literature that parents who are willing to adapt to the changing needs of their adolescents usually consider themselves as competent and are often perceived by their adolescents as responsive and pro-active while not being controlling (Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay, 1997).

The third research question addressed the issue of how different levels of parent-adolescent conflict affect families' psychological well-being and adjustment. Findings relevant to this question mostly support those of previous studies (Knoester, 2003; Shearer, Crouter & McHale, 2005) The strongest theme that emerged from the present investigation

was that parent-adolescent conflicts are perceived to be difficult due to the strong affective content that surrounds the conflicts. Participants' self-image was affected adversely while their school/work performance and peer/sibling relationships remained intact. In fact, peer relationships were perceived helpful sources of support and an opportunity to learn additional conflict resolution strategies. Having siblings was regarded to be a positive experience that had no impact on the quality of the relationship with their parents even though some differential treatment was reported. This finding seems to have little support from the current research regarding the effects of sibling relationship on parent-adolescent conflict (Shanahan, McHale, Osgood & Crouter, 2007; Whiteman, McHale & Crouter, 2003). This could be explained, partly due the limited availability of such findings as a small number of studies have been conducted on the topic of the impact of adolescent-sibling relationship on parent-adolescent conflict, and partly, due to the fact that previous studies used parents' rather than adolescents' reports to assess the interactions between siblings on one hand and parent-adolescent conflict on the other. School and work were perceived as a separate segment of the participants' life which they managed to perform well irrespective of the conflict.

The conflict negatively affected participants self-image insofar that adolescents saw themselves as acting unreasonably at the times of the conflict and parents saw themselves as uncertain and doubtful of their parental abilities. The same results were found in the previous studies by Dekovic (1999) and Sheridan, Peterson and Rosen (2010). Although the findings showed that the conflicts had negative impact on the participants' self-image the effects were reported to be temporary, usually subsiding shortly after the conflicts ended. Additionally, the participants viewed conflicts to have no enduring influence on their psychological well-being. From the viewpoints of the young adults and adolescents the most difficult aspect of conflict with their parents was their perception of not being listened to and not being respected by the parents. Furthermore, adolescents found feelings that arose during and immediately after the

conflicts very difficult to deal with. From the parents' point of view the hardest aspect about the conflict was the lack of conflict resolution and consequent continuation of further conflicts. They also perceived their adolescents not to respect their directives and often felt undermined in their authority.

Feelings that prevailed among the participants in the two studies were anger and tension. For the young adults and the adolescents in the present investigation anger and tension were associated with not being able to fully express their side of the arguments and having to endure parents' punishment. For the parents, adolescents' impulsivity, resistance to accept parents' directives and further escalation of arguments were the factors associated with the reported feelings of anger and tension. These feelings, although short-lived, were universally described across all the participants in the two studies as highly uncomfortable and most difficult aspect of parent-adolescent conflicts, finding consistent with that of Beaumont and Wagner's (2004) study which showed that the more adolescents perceived that their conversational style was different to that of their parents the angrier they got and that the more the parents got angry the more the adolescents tended to emulate their parents emotions.

In respect to the perceived quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and the overall psychological well-being of adolescents and parents, similar views were expressed by the young adults, adolescents and parents in the present investigation. Majority of the young adults reported living stable lives and feeling good about their current place in life and their relationship with their parents. For a few young adults, who experienced highly intense conflicts with their parents during adolescence, the relationship with their parents seem to still be contentious although less intense. These young adults reported lower levels of their current psychological well-being.

For the families in the second study parent-adolescent interactions were perceived to be normal and satisfying. With the exception of a small number of families where the parent-

adolescent relationship was described to be more strenuous and ridden with frequent and intense conflicts, for all other of families in the second study the perceived changes were described to be positive. More specifically, the relationship was described as more egalitarian and adolescents seem to be encouraged to assume more adult-like roles in life. In these families' overall levels of psychological well-being fell within the normal range while the families in which the relationship quality declined since the onset of adolescence lower levels of psychological well-being were reported.

The collective findings from the present investigation support the current research and literature regarding the factors associated with parent-adolescent conflict and the impact of the conflict on families' psychological well-being. That is, low to moderate parent-adolescent conflict is normative and escalation of disagreements into high levels of conflict is determined by the combined effect of conflict intensity, family environment and conflict resolution strategies. It appears from the present investigation that conflict intensity rather than conflict frequency may lead to the escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high levels of conflict. Likewise, conflict resolution strategies play an important role in the escalation of normative disagreements into high levels of conflict. Conflict resolution strategies deemed effective seem to keep parent-adolescent disagreements at a normative level whereas conflict resolution strategies deemed to be ineffective seem to lead to escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high levels of parent-adolescent conflict. Further to this point, the family environment within which conflicts arise may influence whether certain conflict resolution strategies, such as submission and punishment, are perceived as effective or not. Lastly, low to moderate parent-adolescent conflict is associated with normal levels of psychological well-being and adjustment while high levels of parent-adolescent conflict are associated with low levels of psychological well-being and adjustment.

The strengths of the present investigation include the use of multiple informant reports and more in depth analysis of the factors associated with different levels of parent-adolescent conflict. Most research on the impact of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescent problem behaviour often relies on the information provided by either parent and/or adolescent reports which is argued to be subject to inter-rater bias (Smetana, 2011).

Although the present investigation offers new insights into the area of parent-adolescent disagreements there are some limitations associated with its findings. Firstly, the present investigation is conducted using small sample sizes, this limits the generalisability of the current findings. Secondly, most families in the present investigation had both biological parents living at home. Different family structures such as divorced families may have provided more heterogeneous insights into how different levels of parent-adolescents conflict might influence adolescents' psychological adjustment. Thirdly, the present investigation used a retrospective study design. Problems with using a retrospective methodology include difficulty establishing causal relationships between the variables under investigation and the fact that participants tend to recall past experiences that are consistent with their current life circumstances.

Based on the limitations associated with this investigation it is recommended that future studies use a longitudinal methodology to investigate the impact of the three factors associated with escalation of parent-adolescent disagreements into high levels of conflict. For clinicians and practitioners working with families with adolescents it would be useful to include adolescents in many of their programs given that the majority of the interventions concerned with helping families ameliorate deleterious effects of parent-adolescents on families' psychological well-being are predominantly designed for use by parents. Provided that the adolescents' main message in the present investigation is to be listened to, excluding them from participating in family/parenting programs, may hinder their chances for better

psychological adjustment to the many developmental changes during adolescence including managing parent-adolescent conflicts.

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APPENDIX A

Contents:

1. A Plain Language Statement with Consent Form;
2. A 3 part questionnaire about participants (two commercially produced scales, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21, and Satisfaction With Life Scale and a questionnaire about participants' own experience of parent-adolescent disagreements designed by the researcher for the purposes of the present investigation containing commercially produced Issues Checklist);
3. Consent Form to Use Audio Tape;

SECTION 1



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Project Title: “Young adults’ experience of the parent-child conflict during their own adolescence”

Investigators:

- Ivana Pajkic (Doctor of Philosophy student, s3157991@student.rmit.edu.au, 9925-7376)
- Dr Ray Wilks (Project Supervisor: Senior Associate, Division of Psychology, RMIT University, ray.wilks@rmit.edu.au, 9925-7376)
- Dr Mandy Kienhuis (Project Supervisor: Lecturer, Division of Psychology, RMIT University, mandy.kienhuis@rmit.edu.au, 9925-7376)

Dear (participant's name),

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. This information sheet describes the project in straightforward language, or 'plain English'. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?

The researcher is a Doctor of Philosophy student within the Division of Psychology Department at RMIT University. The researcher will conduct the project under the supervision of Dr. Ray Wilks, a Senior Associate in the Division of Psychology in the School of Health Sciences and Dr. Mandy Kienhuis, a Lecturer in the Division of Psychology in the School of Health Sciences. Both supervisors have conducted an extensive research in the past on the nature of parent-child relationship and related issues. The project has been approved by the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee for the purpose of improving our understanding of parent-adolescent conflict and its impact on adolescents' psychological development.

Why have you been approached?

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about this project and to request your permission to conduct, confidentially, an interview with you. Typically, the information sought in the structured interview and questionnaire consists of demographic information and information about your experience of the parent-adolescent conflict.

You have been approached as a result of the researcher gaining permission from your Head of School to randomly approach lecturers in the School to ask them if they would be willing to allow the researcher to introduce the project to their students at the start of a lecture.

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

The project is one of a number of projects aimed at improving our understanding of the nature of parent-adolescent conflict and related issues. While a good deal of research on this topic already exists not very much is understood about the underlying factors that influence conflict between parents and their children during adolescence. For that reason, the projects aim to generate greater and more comprehensive knowledge about the issues related to parent-adolescent conflict. Furthermore, the projects will also attempt to develop a new conflict resolution model for use by parents and adolescents. The primary questions in the present retrospective investigation concern:

1. Young adults' account of parent-adolescent conflict based on their own experience (e.g. frequency of the conflict, severity of the conflict, reasons for the conflict);
2. Young adults' view of the factors influencing conflict with their parents;
3. Young adults' perception of the effectiveness of the conflict resolution strategies used by their parents;
4. Young adult's perception of the effects that the conflict might have had on their psychological development;

For the purpose of the present retrospective investigation 50 male and 50 female students will be recruited.

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

If you are willing to participate in the project you will be invited to attend a structured interview and questionnaire that will last for approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The structured interview and questionnaire will collect the following information:

demographic data (that is, your age, gender, socio-economic status, parents' highest education level, parents' marital status and number of siblings); possible presence of psychopathological symptoms (that is, depression, anxiety, stress) satisfaction with life and information related to your own experience of the conflict with your parents during adolescence and its potential impact on your psychological well-being. In order to assist you in the process of making a truly informed decision about whether you want to participate in this study here is a summary of the questions you can expect to be asked during the structured interview and questionnaire. You will be asked some demographic questions (e.g. your age, gender, ethnicity, parents' highest level of education, parents' marital status and number of siblings), some questions about your current well-being (e.g. symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress) and some questions about your general satisfaction with life (e.g. "In most ways my life is close to ideal" and "If I could live my life again, I would change almost nothing"). You will also be asked some questions related to your own experience of parent-adolescent conflict (e.g. "How did the conflict affect you during adolescence, psychologically, socially, academically, etc?", "How does the conflict affect you now?" and "What would have helped for the conflict to not have taken place or to have declined in its frequency/severity?").

To facilitate accurate recording of responses your permission to audio-tape the interview will be sought.

What are the risks or disadvantages associated with participation?

The present retrospective investigation does not require the use of any aversive, manipulative or potentially damaging equipment. Some people, however, may experience distress from answering some of the questions. If this occurs you will be provided with debriefing, counselling and/or a list of appropriate referral services. Please note that your participation is conducted on a voluntary basis which means that you are free to leave the study at any time should you find it inappropriate or potentially harmful to your mental health.

What are the benefits associated with participation?

At the conclusion of this project participants may request a copy of the combined group results. One benefit of receiving the results is that it may assist you to recognise that many other young adults have dealt with similar issues during their adolescence. The knowledge may be reassuring for you.

Another benefit of participating in this study will be knowing that you have contributed to a greater understanding of the relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and its impact on current psychological well-being.

What will happen to the information I provide?

The collected data will remain in the care of the researcher at RMIT University at all times and at no time will leave the building. Notes taken will be stored in a locked cabinet for security purposes. Nothing in any of the researcher's notes will contain material that can be traced back to you. Therefore, any potentially identifiable information will remain anonymous.

Additionally, information that you provide will be confidential. This means that data obtained in this study will be seen by a small number of people (the researcher and the researcher's two supervisors).

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) a court order is produced, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission.

The results will be kept securely at RMIT University for a period of 5 years and may be disseminated in a paper published in the scientific literature. If publication occurs, no identifying information will be included.

What are my rights as a participant?

You have a right to:

- ✓ withdraw your participation at any time, without prejudice.
- ✓ have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- ✓ have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

The researcher, Ivana Pajkic (s3157991@student.rmit.edu.au, 9925 7376)

The Senior Supervisor, Dr. Ray Wilks (ray.wilks@rmit.edu.au, 9925 7376)

The Second Supervisor, Dr. Mandy Kienhuis (mandy.kienhuis@rmit.edu.au, 9925 7376)

What other issues should I be aware of before deciding whether to participate?

No other issues are involved in participation in this research project.

Yours sincerely

Ivana Pajkic, B.A. Psych, P.Grad.Dip. Psych, MPsych

Dr. Ray Wilks, TPTC, BA, GradDipAppChPsych, MA, PhD

Dr. Mandy Kienhuis, B.B.Sc., B.App.Sc (Hons, Psych), Ph.D.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Executive Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics

Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001.

Details of the complaints procedure are available at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/rd/hrec_complaints

Section 2

Prescribed Consent Form For Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information

Portfolio	Science Engineering & Technology		
School of	Health Sciences		
Name of participant: Email Contact:			
Project Title:	Study 2: "Parents' and Adolescents' Experience of Their Current Conflict" and Study 3: "Conflict Resolution Methods Currently Used by Parents and Adolescents"		
Name(s) of investigators: (1)	Ivana Pajkic	Phone:	99257376
	Dr Ray Wilks	Phone:	99257376
	Dr Mandy Kienhuis	Phone:	99257376

1.I have received a statement explaining the interview/questionnaire involved in this project.

2.I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which - including details of the interviews or questionnaires - have been explained to me.

3.I authorise the investigator or his or her assistant to interview me or administer a questionnaire.

4.I acknowledge that:

- a. Having read Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
- b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
- c. The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
- d. The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
- e. The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a brief report of the project outcomes will be available to me upon request. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant's Consent

Participant:		Date:	
(Signature)			

Witness:		Date:	
(Signature)			

Participants should be given a photocopy of this consent form after it has been signed.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Executive Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 2251.

Details of the complaints procedure are available from the above address.

Section 3

Questionnaire

“Young adults’ experience of the parent-child conflict during their own adolescence”

By
Ivana Pajkic

August 2008

Please provide answers to the following demographic questions.

1. What is your gender? ☐M ☐F

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your residential postcode? _____

4. What is your ethnicity?

Australian ☐

North-West European ☐

South-Eastern European ☐

North African and Middle Eastern ☐

South-East Asian ☐

North-East Asian ☐

Southern and Central Asian ☐

People of the Americas ☐

Sub-Saharan African ☐

Not stated ☐

5. What is your parent's HIGHEST education level?

	Mother	Father
Year 8 or below	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year 9 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year 10 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Year 11 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year 12 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical or further education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
University or other tertiary education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. What is your parents' marital status?

Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Defacto	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never married	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Do you have siblings? Y ☐ N ☐

If yes, please provide details in the table below:

	Gender	Age
Sibling 1		
Sibling 2		
Sibling 3		
Sibling 4		
Sibling 5		

8. What course are you currently studying?

9. Below are five statements, with which you may agree or disagree. Using a 1 to 7 scale, indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number. Please be open and honest in your responses.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
<i>In most ways my life is close to ideal</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>The conditions of my life are excellent</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>I am satisfied with my life</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>So far I have got the important things I want in life</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>If I could live my life again, I would change almost nothing</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2, or 3, which indicates how much the statement applied to you in the past two weeks. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement. The rating is as follows:

- 0 Did not apply to me at all
- 1 Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time
- 2 Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of the time
- 3 Applied to me very much, or most of the time

1. I found it hard to wind down.	0	1	2	3
2. I was aware of dryness in my mouth.	0	1	2	3
3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feelings at all.	0	1	2	3
4. I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g. excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)	0	1	2	3
5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things	0	1	2	3
6. I tended to overreact to situations	0	1	2	3
7. I experienced trembling.	0	1	2	3
8. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy.	0	1	2	3
9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself.	0	1	2	3

10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to.	0	1	2	3
11. I found myself getting agitated.	0	1	2	3
12. I found it difficult to relax.	0	1	2	3
13. I felt down-hearted and blue.	0	1	2	3
14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing.	0	1	2	3
15. I felt I was close to panic.	0	1	2	3
16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything.	0	1	2	3
17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person.	0	1	2	3
18. I felt rather touchy.	0	1	2	3
19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g. sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)	0	1	2	3
20. I felt scared without any good reason.	0	1	2	3
21. I felt that life was meaningless.	0	1	2	3

Please provide answers to the questions related to your own experience of the conflict with your parents during adolescence.

11. In your own experience of adolescence, do you remember having had conflict with your parents?

12. If “Yes”, could you indicate from the list below what types of issues you had conflict over with your parents.

ISSUES CHECKLIST

13. In your own opinion do you experience any disagreements with your parents?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14. If “Yes”, below is a list of things that sometimes get talked about at home. We would like you to look carefully at each topic on the left-hand side of the page and decide whether the two of you together have talked about that topic at all **during adolescence**. If the two of you together have discussed it, circle *Yes* to the right of the topic. If the two of you together have not discussed it, circle *No* to the right of the topic.

Now, we would like you to go back over the list of topics. For those topics for which you circled “Yes”, please answer the two questions on the right-hand side of the page:

a) How many times during the last 2 weeks did the topic come up?

b) How heated did the discussions get?

Topic			How many times?	How heated did the discussions get?				
				<i>Calm</i>	<i>A little angry</i>			<i>Angry</i>
1. Telephone calls	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
2. Time for going to bed	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
3. Cleaning up bedroom	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

4. Doing homework	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
5. Putting away clothes	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
6. Using the television	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
7. Cleanliness (washing, showers, brushing teeth)	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
8. Which clothing to wear	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
9. How neat clothing looks	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
10. Making too much noise at home	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
11. Table manners	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
12. Fighting with brothers or sisters	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
13. Cursing	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
14. How money is spent	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
15. Picking books or movies	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
16. Allowance	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
17. Going places without parents (shopping, movies, etc.)	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

18. Playing stereo or radio too loudly	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
19. Turning off lights in house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
20. Drugs	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
21. Taking care of records, games, toys, and things	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
22. Drinking beer or other liquor	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
23. Buying records, games, toys, and things	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
24. Going on dates	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
25. Who should be friends	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
26. Selecting new clothing	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
27. Sex	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
28. Coming home on time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
29. Getting to school on time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
30. Getting low grades	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

in school								
31. Getting in trouble in school	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
32. Lying	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
33. Helping out around the house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
34. Talking back to parents	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
35. Getting up in the morning	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
36. Bothering parents when they want to be left alone	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
37. Bothering teenager when he/she wants to be left alone	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
38. Putting feet on furniture	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
39. Messing up the house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
40. What time to have meals	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
41. How to spend free time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

42. Smoking	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
43. Earning money away from house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
44. What teenager eats	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

Adopted from *Negotiating Parent-Adolescent Conflict: A Behavioral-Family Systems Approach* by Arthur I. Robin and Sharon I. Foster. Copyright 1989 by The Guilford Press. Reprinted in *Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Clinical Workbook* (2nd ed.) by Russell A. Barkley and Kevin R. Murphy. Permission to photocopy this form is granted to purchasers of the *Workbook* for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

Check to see that you circled Yes or No for every topic. Then tell the interviewer you are finished.

13. When can you first remember having conflicts with your parents?

14. How often did you have conflicts with your parents during adolescence?

15. In your experience, how severe were the conflicts?

1	2	3	4
Extremely	Severe	Moderately	Not Severe
Severe	Severe		

16. Who did you disagree with more, your father or your mother?

17. Would you be able to describe any differences in the conflicts you had with your (nominated parent) as opposed to the conflicts you had with your (other parent)?

18. How did the conflicts usually get resolved (elaborate on methods used to resolve conflict)?

19. How effective were the methods used?

20. How did the conflict affect you during adolescence (psychologically, socially, academically, etc)?

21. How is the conflict affecting you now?

22. (If you answered 'Yes' to question 7) Did having a brother/sister affect, in any way, the quality of your relationship with your parents during adolescence?

23. If “yes”, how did it affect the quality of your relationship with your parents during adolescence?

24. In your own opinion, how could any of the conflicts you experienced as an adolescent have been prevented or ameliorated?

Thank you for participating in this study.



Consent Form for the Use of Audio-Tape

Portfolio: Science Engineering and Technology

School of: Health Science

Project Title: *“Young Adult’s Experience of the Parent-Child Conflict
During Their Own Adolescence”*

Names of Investigators: (1) Ivana Pajkic Phone: 9925 7376
(2) Dr Ray Wilks Phone: 9925 7376
(3) Dr Mandy Kienhuis Phone: 9925 7376

I agree / do not agree to the interview being audio-taped for the purpose of facilitating later transcription and coding of responses.

I understand that refusal to agree to the use of audio-tape does not exclude me from participating in this research.

Tape recordings will be destroyed immediately after the use for this project.

Participant's Consent

Participant's Name: _____260Date: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

APPENDIX B

Contents:

4. A Plain Language Statement with Consent Form;
5. A 3 part questionnaire for parents (cover letter, two commercially produced scales, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21, and Satisfaction With Life Scale and a questionnaire about participants' own experience of parent-adolescent disagreements designed by the researcher for the purposes of the present investigation including commercially produced Issues Checklist);
6. A 3 part questionnaire for adolescents (cover letter, two commercially produced scales, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21, and Satisfaction With Life Scale and a questionnaire about participants' own experience of parent-adolescent disagreements designed by the researcher for the purposes of the present investigation including commercially produced Issues Checklist);
7. Two Agency Consent Letters (Family Mediation Centre consent letter and Aspendale Clinic consent letter)
8. Poster Notice;
9. A list of referral agencies as part of the contingency plan for this investigation.

SECTION 1



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Project Title: “Parents’ and Adolescents’ Experience of Their Current Conflict” and
“Conflict Resolution Methods Currently Used by Parents and Adolescents”

Investigators:

- Ivana Pajkic (Doctor of Philosophy student, s3157991@student.rmit.edu.au, 0421 470 149)
- Prof Ray Wilks (Project Supervisor: Senior Associate, Discipline of Psychology, RMIT University, ray_wilks@imu.edu.my, 9925-7376)
- Dr Mandy Kienhuis (Project Supervisor: Lecturer, Discipline of Psychology, RMIT University, mandy.kienhuis@rmit.edu.au, 9925-7376)

Dear Participant,

I am a Doctor of Philosophy student in the Discipline of Psychology at RMIT University. My two supervisors, Prof. Ray Wilks and Dr. Mandy Kienhuis and I invite you to participate in our research project. Both supervisors have conducted a lot of research in the past on parent-child relationships and related issues.

This information sheet describes the project in clear language. Please read this sheet carefully and be sure you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project. If you have any questions about the project, please phone Ivana Pajkic (see above).

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?

Parents and their adolescent child are being invited to join in the research. We are doing this research so we can better understand parent-adolescent disagreements and their effect on adolescents and parents. We also want to find better ways of resolving those disagreements.

Why have you been approached?

You are a parent of, or an adolescent aged 12 to 19 years. Your treating agency has given me approval to approach their clients to ask them if they would be willing to participate in the project.

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

The project is about improving our understanding and knowledge of parent-adolescent disagreements and how they are being resolved. The main question that the research attempts to address is how disagreements between parents and adolescents affect the way adolescents feel and think about themselves. The research also attempts to develop new strategies for resolving disagreements that both parents and adolescents can use.

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

If you agree to participate in the project the first step would be to obtain your (and your parents) permission by completing a written informed consent form provided on the last page of this letter. To protect confidentiality of your answers, the consent forms will be removed from the survey package and stored separately upon their receipt. You will then be invited to complete the survey that will take between 30 and 45 minutes. You will be asked some questions about three things:

1. Questions about you - your age, gender, ethnicity, school and family;
2. Questions about how you feel about yourself and your life at the moment.
For example, 'I felt scared without any good reason' or 'I am satisfied with my life';
3. Questions about your own experience of disagreements with your parent/child. For example, 'How do you feel when having a disagreement with your parent/child?' or 'In your own opinion, how can the disagreements you have with your parents be stopped or changed?'

To protect privacy and confidentiality of your answers you will be required to complete the questionnaires independently (away from other people) and immediately after completion place them in a separate bag provided in the survey

package. You will then include the bag together with your parent/child's questionnaires in the prepaid envelope and return it via mail.

What are the risks or disadvantages associated with participation?

While unlikely, answering some questions may raise issues of concern for some individuals. In this case, you can contact any of the support services from a list of community and mental health agencies provided as part of this kit.

What are the benefits associated with participation?

One benefit of agreeing to participate in this study will be knowing that you have contributed to a better understanding of:

1. the relationship between parents and adolescents, and
2. how arguments can affect the way adolescents feel and think about themselves.

Another benefit is that it may help you to understand that many other parents and adolescents have dealt with similar difficulties.

What will happen to the information I provide?

The information you provide will be in the care of the researchers and the researchers will be the only people to see your survey. No one would be able to identify you from the information you provided in the survey.

For security purpose data will be stored in a locked cabinet located at RMIT University for a period of 5 years.

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) a court order is produced, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission.

At the end of this project a short report, outlining some of the major findings, will be made available to the general public only. Copies of the report will be available for collection from the agencies' reception desk. Results may be written in a paper published in the scientific literature. If publication occurs, no identifying information will be included.

What are my rights as a participant?

You have a right to:

- ✓ withdraw your participation at any time, without prejudice.
- ✓ have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

The researcher, Ivana Pajkic (s3157991@student.rmit.edu.au, 9925 7376)

What other issues should I be aware of before deciding whether to participate?

No other issues are involved in participation in this research project.

Yours sincerely

Ivana Pajkic, B.A. Psych, P.Grad.Dip. Psych, MPsych

Dr. Ray Wilks, TPTC, BA, GradDipAppChPsych, MA, PhD

Dr. Mandy Kienhuis, B.B.Sc., B.App.Sc (Hons, Psych), Ph.D.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Executive Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics

Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001.

Details of the complaints procedure are available at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/rd/hrec_complaints

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT (with minors)

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described
I agree to complete the written surveys as part of the research project titled
"Impact of Parent-Adolescent Disagreement on Adolescent 's Psychological
Development" run by RMIT University's Division of Psychology.
3. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
 - (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
 - (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
 - (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to journal articles, university library archive and at conference presentations. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant Consent

Participant

Date:

(Signature)

Witness:

Witness: _____ Date: _____
(Signature)

Where participant is under 18 years of age:

I consent to the participation of _____ in the
above project.

(1)	(2)	Date
Signature: _____		
(Signatures of parents or guardians)		

Witness: _____ Date: _____
(Witness to signature)

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Ethics Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 2251.

Details of the complaints procedure are available on the [Complaints with respect to participation in research at RMIT](#) page.

SECTION 2



PARENT SURVEY KIT

About the research:

This research is about improving our understanding and knowledge of disagreements between parents and adolescents. The research aims to find better ways of resolving those disagreements.

The Survey Kit:

This Kit contains all the information you need to make a decision about you taking part in the research.

The Kit contains:

1. An Invitation Letter (or a Plain Language Statement) about the project;
2. A questionnaire about you;
3. A questionnaire about how you feel and how satisfied with your life you are at present;
4. A questionnaire about disagreements between you and your child (for the parent survey) or parent (for the adolescent survey);
5. List of referrals in case you need to speak to somebody;
6. Addressed prepaid envelope;
7. One white envelope.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

If you agree to participate in the study, written informed consent will be requested from you and your child. This is an anonymous survey and as such all the information provided will be treated confidentially. To ensure confidentiality of your answers:

1. you will be asked to complete the questions independently and place them in separate bags included in the kit, and
2. upon the receipt of returned surveys, the consent forms will be removed from the package and stored separately.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter.

PART 1. Questions about you

Please provide answers to the following demographic questions.

4. What is your gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female

5. What is your age?

6. What is your residential postcode?

7. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Australian
- ☐ North-West European
- ☐ South-Eastern European
- ☐ North African and Middle Eastern
- ☐ South-East Asian
- ☐ North-East Asian
- ☐ Southern and Central Asian
- ☐ People of the Americas
- ☐ Sub-Saharan African

☐ Other

8. What is your **HIGHEST** educational level?

☐ Year 8 or below

☐ Year 9 or equivalent

☐ Year 10 or equivalent

☐ Year 11 or equivalent

☐ Year 12 or equivalent

☐ Technical or further education

☐ University or other tertiary education

9. What is your current marital status?

☐ Married

☐ Separated

☐ Divorced

☐ Widowed

☐ Defacto

☐ Never married

10. If you are separated/divorced what percentage of their time do the children live:

With you: _____ %

With the other parent: _____ %

Independently: _____ %

11. Does the adolescent child have siblings/half-siblings/step-siblings?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide details in the table below:

Relationship to the adolescent child	Gender	Age

9. What is your current occupation?

PART 2. Questions about how you feel about yourself and your life

10. Below are five statements, with which you may agree or disagree. Using a 1 to 7 scale, indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number. Please be open and honest in your responses.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>nor Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
<i>In most ways my life is close to ideal</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>The conditions of my life are excellent</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>I am satisfied with my life</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>So far I have got the important things I want in life</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>If I could live my life again, I would change almost nothing</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Please read each statement and circle number 0, 1, 2, or 3, to indicate how much the statement applied to you in the **past two weeks**. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement. The rating is as follows:

- 0 Did not apply to me at all
- 1 Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time
- 2 Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of the time
- 3 Applied to me very much, or most of the time

1. I found it hard to wind down.	0	1	2	3
2. I was aware of dryness in my mouth.	0	1	2	3
3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feelings at all.	0	1	2	3
4. I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g. excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion).	0	1	2	3
5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things.	0	1	2	3
6. I tended to overreact to situations.	0	1	2	3

7. I experienced trembling.	0	1	2	3
8. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy.	0	1	2	3
9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself.	0	1	2	3
10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to.	0	1	2	3
11. I found myself getting agitated.	0	1	2	3
12. I found it difficult to relax.	0	1	2	3
13. I felt down-hearted and blue.	0	1	2	3
14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing.	0	1	2	3
15. I felt I was close to panic.	0	1	2	3
16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything.	0	1	2	3
17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person.	0	1	2	3
18. I felt rather touchy.	0	1	2	3
19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g. sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat).	0	1	2	3
20. I felt scared without any good reason.	0	1	2	3
21. I felt that life was meaningless.	0	1	2	3

PART 3. Questions about the disagreements between you and your child

1. In your own opinion do you experience any conflict (meaning a state of tension and disagreement between two people; Lohman & Jarvis, 2000) with your adolescent child/ren?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. If “Yes”, below is a list of things that sometimes get talked about at home. We would like you to look carefully at each topic on the left-hand side of the page and decide whether the two of you together have talked about that topic at all **during the last 2 weeks**. If the two of you together have discussed it, circle *Yes* to the right of the topic. If the two of you together have *not* discussed it, circle *No* to the right of the topic.

Now, we would like you to go back over the list of topics. For those topics for which you circled “Yes”, please answer the two questions on the right-hand side of the page:

- a) How many times during the last 2 weeks did the topic come up?
- b) How heated did the discussions get?

Topic			How <i>many</i> <i>times?</i>	How heated did the discussions get?				
				<i>Calm</i>	<i>A little angry</i>		<i>Angry</i>	
45. Telephone calls	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
46. Time for going to bed	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
47. Cleaning up bedroom	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
48. Doing homework	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
49. Putting away clothes	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
50. Using the television	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
51. Cleanliness (washing, showers, brushing teeth)	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
52. Which clothing to	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

wear								
53. How neat clothing looks	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
54. Making too much noise at home	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
55. Table manners	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
56. Fighting with brothers or sisters	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
57. Cursing	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
58. How money is spent	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
59. Picking books or movies	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
60. Allowance	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
61. Going places without parents (shopping, movies, etc.)	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
62. Playing stereo or radio too loudly	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
63. Turning off lights in house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
64. Drugs	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
65. Taking care of records, games, toys,	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

and things								
66. Drinking beer or other liquor	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
67. Buying records, games, toys, and things	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
68. Going on dates	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
69. Who should be friends	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
70. Selecting new clothing	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
71. Sex	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
72. Coming home on time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
73. Getting to school on time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
74. Getting low grades in school	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
75. Getting in trouble in school	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
76. Lying	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
77. Helping out around the house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
78. Talking back to	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

parents								
79. Getting up in the morning	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
80. Bothering parents when they want to be left alone	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
81. Bothering teenager when he/she wants to be left alone	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
82. Putting feet on furniture	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
83. Messing up the house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
84. What time to have meals	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
85. How to spend free time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
86. Smoking	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
87. Earning money away from house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
88. What teenager eats	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

Please check to see that you have circled 'Yes' or 'No' for every topic.

Adopted from *Negotiating Parent-Adolescent Conflict: A Behavioral-Family Systems Approach* by Arthur I. Robin and Sharon I. Foster. Copyright 1989 by The Guilford Press. Reprinted in *Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Clinical Workbook* (2nd ed.) by Russell A. Barkley and Kevin R. Murphy. Permission to photocopy this form is granted to purchasers of the *Workbook* for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

Below please provide written answers to the following questions which are related to your own experience of any conflicts/disagreements you have with your child.

3. When can you first remember having conflicts with your adolescent child/ren?

4. How often do you have conflicts with your adolescent child/ren? (please circle)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Once	Few times a	Once a	Few times a	Once a month	Few times	Once every few
a week	week	fortnight	fortnight		a month	months

5. In general how severe are the disagreements? (please circle)

1	2	3	4
Extremely	Severe	Moderately	Not
severe		severe	severe

6. Who do you think the adolescent child/ren have more conflict with?

☐ You?

☐ The other parent?

7. Describe any differences in the conflicts you have with your adolescent child/ren as opposed to the conflicts they have with the other parent?

8. What is the most difficult thing about having a conflict with your adolescent child/ren?

9. How do the conflicts usually get resolved (describe methods/ways of resolving conflict)?

10. How effective are these methods?

11. In your opinion, how is the conflict affecting your adolescent child/ren's:

a) view of themselves?

b) behaviour immediately after a conflict?

c) interactions with their peers?

d) academic performance?

12. How is the conflict affecting your:

a) view of yourself?

b) interactions with your peers?

c) work performance?

d) behaviour after a conflict?

13. Has your relationship with your adolescent child changed since s/he has become an adolescent?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14. If "Yes", how has it changed?

15. In your own opinion, how can the conflicts you experience with your adolescent child/ren be reduced?

Thank you for participating in this study.

SECTION 3



ADOLESCENT

SURVEY KIT

About the research:

This research is about improving our understanding and knowledge of disagreements between parents and adolescents. The research aims to find better ways of resolving those disagreements.

The Survey Kit:

This Kit contains all the information you need to make a decision about you taking part in the research.

The Kit contains:

8. An Invitation Letter (or a Plain Language Statement) about the project;
9. A questionnaire about you;
10. A questionnaire about how you feel and how satisfied with your life you are at present;
11. A questionnaire about disagreements between you and your child (for the parent survey) or parent (for the adolescent survey);
12. List of referrals in case you need to speak to somebody;
13. One white envelope.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

If you agree to participate in the study, written informed consent will be requested from you and your child. This is an anonymous survey and as such all the information provided will be treated confidentially. To ensure confidentiality of your answers:

3. you will be asked to complete the questions independently and place them in separate bags included in the kit, and
4. upon the receipt of returned surveys, the consent forms will be removed from the package and stored separately.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter.

PART 1. Questions about you

Please put a tick in the boxes next to the answer you think is correct.

12. Are you ☐ Male or ☐ Female

13. How old are you?

14. What is the postcode of the suburb you live in?

15. What is your family background?

☐ Australian

☐ European

☐ African

☐ Middle Eastern

☐ Asian

☐ People of the Americas

☐ Other

16. What is your parent's **HIGHEST** education level?

	Mother	Father
Year 8 or below	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year 9 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year 10 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year 11 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year 12 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical or further education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
University or other tertiary education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. What is your parent's marital status?

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Defacto
- ☐ Single

18. If your parents are separated/divorced please write in percentages what time do you live

With your mother: _____ %

With your father: _____ %

Independently: _____ %

19. Do you have a brother/sister?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please provide details in the table below:

	Male / Female	Age
Sibling 1		
Sibling 2		
Sibling 3		
Sibling 4		
Sibling 5		

10. What year are you currently attending in school? (please circle)

Year 7

Year 8

Year 9

Year 10

Year 11

Year 12

PART 2. Questions about how you feel about yourself and your life

On this and the next page there are two tables with some questions about how you feel these days. Please read the instructions at the top of the tables to better answer the questions.

Table 1. Below are five statements, with which you may agree or disagree. Using a 1 to 7 scale, indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number. Please be open and honest in your responses.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>nor Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
<i>In most ways my life is close to ideal</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>The conditions of my life are excellent</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>I am satisfied with my life</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>So far I have got the important things I want in life</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>If I could live my life again, I would change almost nothing</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table 2. Please read each statement and circle number 0, 1, 2, or 3, which indicates how much the statement applied to you in the **past two weeks**. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement. The rating is as follows:

- 0 Did not apply to me at all
- 1 Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time
- 2 Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of the time
- 3 Applied to me very much, or most of the time

1. I found it hard to wind down.	0	1	2	3
2. I was aware of dryness in my mouth.	0	1	2	3
3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feelings at all.	0	1	2	3
4. I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g. excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion).	0	1	2	3
5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things.	0	1	2	3

6. I tended to overreact to situations.	0	1	2	3
7. I experienced trembling.	0	1	2	3
8. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy.	0	1	2	3
9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself.	0	1	2	3
10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to.	0	1	2	3
11. I found myself getting agitated.	0	1	2	3
12. I found it difficult to relax.	0	1	2	3
13. I felt down-hearted and blue.	0	1	2	3
14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing.	0	1	2	3
15. I felt I was close to panic.	0	1	2	3
16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything.	0	1	2	3
17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person.	0	1	2	3
18. I felt rather touchy.	0	1	2	3
19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g. sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat).	0	1	2	3
20. I felt scared without any good reason.	0	1	2	3
21. I felt that life was meaningless.	0	1	2	3

PART 3. Questions about the disagreements between you and your parents

1. In your own opinion do you experience any disagreements with your parents?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. If “Yes”, below is a list of things that sometimes get talked about at home. We would like you to look carefully at each topic on the left-hand side of the page and decide whether the two of you together have talked about that topic at all **during the last two weeks**. If the two of you together have discussed it, circle *Yes* to the right of the topic. If the two of you together have not discussed it, circle *No* to the right of the topic.

Now, we would like you to go back over the list of topics. For those topics for which you circled “Yes”, please answer the two questions on the right-hand side of the page:

a) How many times during the last 2 weeks did the topic come up?

b) How heated did the discussions get?

Topic			How many times?	How heated did the discussions get?				
				Calm	A little angry		Angry	
89. Telephone calls	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
90. Time for going to bed	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
91. Cleaning up bedroom	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
92. Doing homework	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
93. Putting away clothes	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
94. Using the television	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
95. Cleanliness (washing, showers, brushing teeth)	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
96. Which clothing to	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

wear								
97. How neat clothing looks	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
98. Making too much noise at home	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
99. Table manners	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
100 Fighting with brothers or sisters	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
101 Cursing	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
102 How money is spent	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
103 Picking books or movies	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
104 Allowance	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
105 Going places without parents (shopping, movies, etc.)	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
106 Playing stereo or radio too loudly	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
107 Turning off lights in house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
108 Drugs	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
109 Taking care of records, games, toys,	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

and things								
110Drinking beer or other liquor	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
111Buying records, games, toys, and things	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
112Going on dates	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
113Who should be friends	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
114Selecting new clothing	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
115Sex	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
116Coming home on time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
117Getting to school on time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
118Getting low grades in school	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
119Getting in trouble in school	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
120Lying	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
121Helping out around the house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
122Talking back to	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

parents								
123Getting up in the morning	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
124Bothering parents when they want to be left alone	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
125Bothering teenager when he/she wants to be left alone	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
126Putting feet on furniture	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
127Messing up the house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
128What time to have meals	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
129How to spend free time	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
130Smoking	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
131Earning money away from house	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
132What teenager eats	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5

Adopted from *Negotiating Parent-Adolescent Conflict: A Behavioral-Family Systems Approach* by Arthur I. Robin and Sharon I. Foster. Copyright 1989 by The Guilford Press. Reprinted in *Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Clinical Workbook* (2nd ed.) by Russell A. Barkley and Kevin R. Murphy. Permission to photocopy this form is granted to purchasers of the *Workbook* for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

3. When can you first remember having disagreements with your parents?

4. How often do you have disagreements with your parents? (please circle)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Once	Few times a	Once a	Few times a	Once a month	Few times	Once every few
a week	week	fortnight	fortnight		a month	months

5. In general how severe are the disagreements? (please circle)

1	2	3	4
Extremely	Severe	Moderately	Not
severe		severe	severe

6. Who do you disagree more with?

☐ your father? or ☐ your mother?

7. Would you be able to describe any differences in the disagreements you have with your (nominated parent) as opposed to the disagreements you have with your (other parent)?

8. What is the most difficult thing about having a disagreement with your parent(s)?

9. How do the disagreements usually get resolved?

10. How well do they work?

11. When having a disagreement with your parent(s):

a) how do you see yourself?

b) how do you behave immediately after the disagreement?

c) how do you behave around your friends?

d) how do you perform at school?

14. In your own opinion, how can the disagreements you have with your parents be reduced?



SECTION 4

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DR. TIAN KHOO MBBS

DR. MARY THOMAS MBChB, FRACGP, MSc (S. Med)

Ethics Committee

Thursday 28th July 2011

Dear Dr Sirs,

Re: Ms Ivana Pajkic

Please note that Aspendale Clinic has given permission for Ms Ivana Pajkic to ask our patients if they would be willing to complete a survey in respect of her thesis based on adolescent and parent conflict. Ms Pajkic will be putting a notice up in our

waiting room informing patients of the anonymous survey which they can then request a copy from reception for completion.

Yours faithfully,

Claire Worrall

Practice Manager

On behalf of Aspendale Clinic



Family Mediation Centre

Level 4, 1001 Nepean Highway

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Moorabbin 3189

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email: family@mediation.com.au

<http://www.mediation.com.au>

13th September, 2011

Ms Ivana Pajkic

RE: Research Proposal

Parents' and Adolescents' Experience of their Current Conflict and Conflict Methods

Currently used by Parents and Adolescents

Dear Ivana

I am writing to confirm that the Family Mediation Centre will assist you in your research by making the client surveys available at each of our reception areas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meg Henham'.

Meg Henham

Manager – Narre Warren

SECTION 5

NOTICE

A study is being conducted by RMIT University's Discipline of Psychology, for the purpose of investigating parent-adolescent arguments/disagreements and their effect on families' psychological well-being. If you have an adolescent child and are interested in taking part in this study you can find more information about how to participate in the survey kit located at the reception. **Please note that there are two sets of survey kits, one for parents and one for adolescents.**